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THE INDEPENDENT

Thursday 19 March 1998 45p (IR50p) No 3,562

Newspaper of the Year for photographs

End of the male breadwinner

By Anthony Bevins
and Diane Coyle

MINISTERS are to break one of the most patronising foundation stones of the welfare state, the idea of the male "breadwinner", by giving unemployed partners equality in the hunt for jobs.

With the Cabinet due to approve the Green Paper on welfare reform today, for publication next week, Harriet Harman, the Secretary of State for Social Security, put the new drive for equality into context last night when she told a conference of academics at York University:

"Key factors taken for granted in post-war society cannot be taken for granted in the 1990s."

"In the days of Attlee and Beveridge, male employment was the norm. When Beveridge set out his plans for the welfare state, he did so on the basis that most women gave up 'gainful occupation' when they got married and undertook instead 'to perform vital, unpaid service'."

Ms Harman quoted the Beveridge view: "In the next 30 years, housewives and mothers have vital work to do in ensuring the adequate continuance of the British race."

She added: "Today, in most quar-

ters at any rate, we have moved on. Our goal is employability for men and women."

Yesterday, on the markets, the pound soared to a nine-year high in reaction to the Budget - to the horror of exporters. The financial markets concluded that the Chancellor had left it to the Bank of England to steer the economy by raising interest rates again, and sent the level of sterling up in anticipation of this move. Figures suggesting the decline in unemployment is slowing were shrugged off.

Mr Brown insisted that he had done enough to squeeze growth, say-

ing his measures added up to a tough fiscal policy with £17bn being taken out of the economy over two years. "I don't think anyone can say that's anything other than a tough stance," he said.

If the currency markets reflected disappointment with the Budget, investors expressed their delight by taking share prices to a new record. The FTSE-100 index climbed 69 points to 5,903.6.

The first step toward equality for the female breadwinner was taken by Gordon Brown in Tuesday's Budget, with a little-noticed decision to include about 10,000 women - child-

less, under-25 partners of unemployed men - in the New Deal programme, under which people refusing job or training offers face benefit penalties.

But the Chancellor also announced that an estimated 250,000 predominantly female partners of unemployed Jobseeker's Allowance claimants, 95 per cent of whom are male "breadwinners", are to be offered their first chance of joining the welfare-to-work programmes.

Mr Brown has allocated £60m from the windfall tax to ensure that all over-25 unemployed "partners" of unemployed claimants "receive

the help they need to get back to work."

That view was reflected in this week's pre-Budget report on *The Modernisation of Britain's Tax and Benefit System* by Martin Taylor, chief executive of Barclays Bank, who reported to the Chancellor that the implicit presumption of the benefits system was that "partners of unemployed people cannot or do not want to work".

"The existing rules seem to be left over from the days when it was assumed that all men worked and their wives did not. Today, when 47 per cent of employees are women, ba-

sic benefit policy on such a notion is, to say the least, inappropriate."

The Chancellor's announcement on opportunities for the unemployed claimants - urged by Mr Taylor - was the first step in cracking that inbuilt attitude.

There was a broad welcome for the detailed Budget measures to encourage small businesses and investment. Mr Brown also won praise for the reforms to tax and benefits designed to make sure that work pays for those on low incomes.

Budget Aftermath, pages 6 & 7; City and Business, page 23

NHS waiting lists to be cut by 100,000 within a year

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

HOSPITAL waiting lists will be cut by 100,000 within a year, the biggest reduction in the history of the NHS, Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, said yesterday.

The pledge, which will be difficult to achieve, will mean the biggest-ever increase in the number of operations, and will require hospitals to carry out surgery seven days a week. The



On the line: Frank Dobson

drive could also trigger a politically embarrassing boom for the private sector in areas where the health service cannot cope.

Throwing down the gauntlet to the NHS and putting his political future on the line, Mr Dobson said £320m of the extra £500m for the NHS announced in Tuesday's budget would be devoted to cutting waiting lists in England which at the last count in December topped 1.26 million, 100,000 higher than at the election, and rising.

"By April next year, I expect hospital waiting lists in England to be shorter than the 1.16 million record level we inherited from the previous government. That's the target," he said.

Delivering this target would

go half way towards meeting one of Labour's five key election pledges - to cut waiting lists by 100,000 below the level at which they stood at the time of the election in May last year. It would be achieved by a mixture of carrot and stick, Mr Dobson said. "There will be rewards for [health authorities and trusts] who meet their targets and sanctions for those who do not."

The NHS Confederation said the extra money was welcome but solved only part of the problem. The other part was finding the spare capacity in an already overstretched NHS.

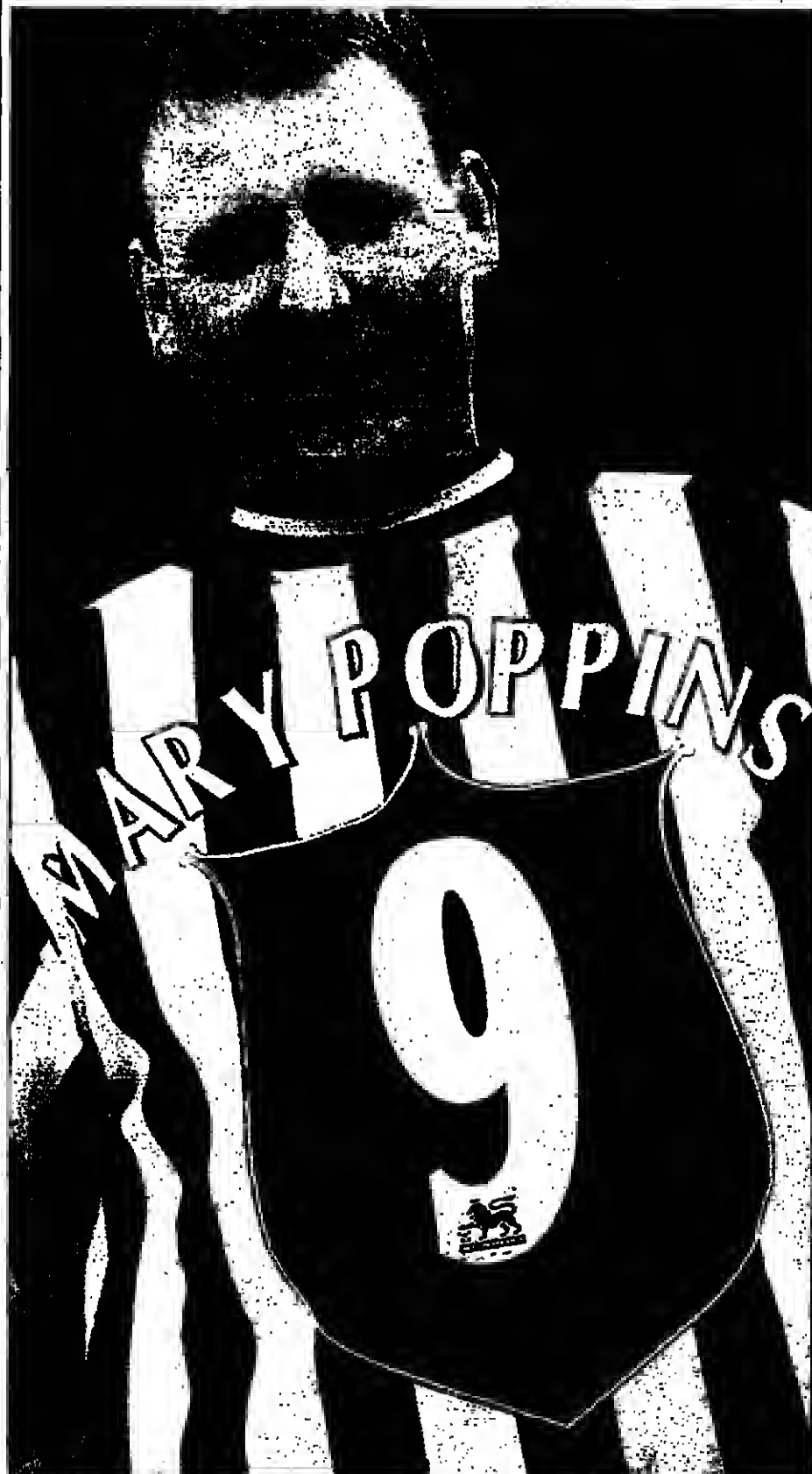
Stephen Thornton, chief executive, said: "I would imagine a number of health authorities will find the best way to get the lists down will be in commission work in the private sector... We have got to be careful to get value for money because in the mad rush for operations prices could rise."

Mr Thornton said that, viewed strictly in terms of health gain, spending to cut waiting lists was probably not the best use to which the money could be put. "But the government has come in with a political imperative to cut waiting lists. That is the political reality and we are not complaining about it."

The British Medical Association said a focus on waiting lists could mean that patients with minor conditions were treated sooner than those with more urgent ones.

James Johnson, chairman of the BMA's consultants committee, said: "We do not want to see people waiting unacceptably long times in pain and distress. But we want a broader, more sophisticated look at the problem than simply taking patients off the end of the queue."

Fans get shirty as Newcastle bosses repent



United in anger: Newcastle fan Stephen Cockburn showing off the shirt he was planning to wear to last night's match against Crystal Palace. Soccer shame, page 3. Photograph: Will Walker

Skull discovery shows that birds are descended from dinosaurs

By Charles Arthur
Science Editor

TWO KEY pieces of evidence have emerged indicating that birds really are descended from dinosaurs.

The discovery of skulls of animals about the size of turkeys which lived 70 million years ago in what is now the Gobi Desert provided one key; the other was in Madagascar, where archaeologists found a 65-million-year old fossil of a raven-sized bird with dinosaur-like features.

Although the public has generally thought that fossil skeletons such as the famous Archaeopteryx, a 140-million-year old "dinosaur with wings", provided incontrovertible proof that birds evolved from dinosaurs, palaeontologists have been less sure.

In recent years, they have suggested that birds and dinosaurs evolved separately, and that the cold-blooded Archaeopteryx, might have been an accident of evolution that later disappeared. Meanwhile, the warm-blooded ancestors of birds would have evolved separately, surviving the "dinosaur killer" asteroid which hit the Earth 65 million years ago to become the feathered animals we know today.

But the findings in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia were of turkey-sized animals which walked on two legs, and had a number of bird-like features. Yet they also had dinosaur features: long necks and tails, and - unlike any bird living today - stubby forearms that ended in a single, blunt claw.

Reporting today in the science journal *Nature*, Luis Chiappe and researchers from the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and George Washington University, Washington DC, say the fossils revealed an important physical

characteristic normally seen only in birds. The animals were capable of "prokinesis" - the movement of the snout up and down independently from the rest of the skull. This allowed the creature to open its mouth wide to eat large food items, and is considered an advanced characteristic of birds. "These strange creatures were actually early birds," the team said.

That in itself suggests that such an ability arose early in bird evolution - and that it happened in the time of the dinosaurs.

The second plank of evidence is reported tomorrow in the journal *Science*. A team led by Catherine Forster of the State University of New York found fossils of a type never before seen, including wing bones of a bird, but also a long tail and "a huge, sickle-shaped killing claw" that resemble such features in meat-eating theropod dinosaurs.

Today's news

Genetics in a can

A GOVERNMENT panel is today expected to approve a genetically engineered version of tinned tomatoes. Page 3

Regional aid loss

SOME OF the poorest regions in the UK reacted with dismay yesterday at the prospect of losing hundreds of millions of pounds in a shake up of the EU aid programme. Page 12

Jail beatings

REPORTS that inmates at a jail have been systematically beaten by a group of about 20 prison officers are to be investigated in a major inquiry. Page 2

Cook's tour

SHRUGGING off his apparent snub by Benjamin Netanyahu, Robin Cook has been trying to build confidence with Syria and Lebanon. Page 14

Paedophile ruling

THE whereabouts of paedophiles after they are released from prison can be revealed to the public, the Court of Appeal has ruled. Page 10

Clinton setback

THE release of letters allegedly sent by Kathleen Willey to President Clinton appeared to have backfired. Page 15

5 facts about male strippers

- 1 ten years ago there were 100 male strippers in the UK, today there are 200
- 2 male strippers earn an average of £100 per performance
- 3 the majority of male strippers are married
- 4 standard equipment includes baby lotion, baby oil, shaving foam, fresh cream, yoghurt and a banana
- 5 most male strippers shave everything once a week

tonight
9:50pm on 5



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PEOPLE LIFE NEWS

Britain's radioactive lobsters upset Norway

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

NUCLEAR waste from Sellafield is polluting Scandinavian lobsters, shrimps and mussels 500 miles away, Nordic ministers have told the British government.

In an official complaint to Michael Meacher, the environment minister, they say human health and the environment could be at risk from a 50-fold increase in some discharges over just four years.

Their joint demand for cuts in discharges, already rejected

by Mr Meacher, follows similar complaints from the Irish government. It also follows a cull last month of seagulls and pigeons in the Sellafield area after their droppings were found to be radioactive.

Some of the heaviest concentrations found during investigations by the Norwegian Radiological Protection Board were in the claw and tail muscle of lobsters, parts which are usually eaten. However, much higher levels of radiation are allowed in British seafood.

The details were revealed in

a written Parliamentary answer to Llew Smith, Labour MP for Blaenau Gwent, who has been campaigning on the issue.

Anna Lindh, chair of the Nordic Council of Environment Ministers and environment minister for Sweden, told Mr Meacher in a formal letter that the discharges were polluting some of the world's most valuable fishing grounds. Changes under consultation in Britain could result in even higher discharge levels from Sellafield, she said.

According to the Norwe-

gian report, liquid discharges of a substance called Technetium-99 have increased to 50 times their 1994 level, while remaining well inside British safety levels. In the early 1990s, the waste was held back while a new processing plant was completed.

Ms Lindh's letter called for the discharges to be stopped. "The Nordic countries will closely follow the development of this issue," it said.

Mr Meacher replied that the discharges were not radiologically significant either to humans or to other species. The proposed

changes would actually lead to a cut in the levels rather than an increase, he said.

"I share the concern of the Nordic countries for protection of the marine environment. While I appreciate that the detection of any levels of radioactivity can give rise to concern, and there is never room for complacency, it is important to consider the radiological impact. The UK is rigorous in adhering to all of the international commitments which it enters into in the field of environmental radioactivity," he said.

Public rail firm mooted by MPs

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

THE GOVERNMENT should consider taking a stake in Railtrack if it fails to deliver a modern and efficient railway system, according to a report by a powerful all-party committee of MPs.

The remarkable conclusion was pushed by the 11 Labour members of the committee — and accepted reluctantly by the four Tory MPs on the transport select committee.

Nationalisation of Railtrack, the company that owns the nation's stations and tracks, remains an aim for many of the Labour faithful.

Taking stake in the company was also proposed when senior executives met ministers to discuss the privatisation of the Tube. The idea was in return for a shareholding. Railtrack would inject capital into the network — but the scheme was rejected.

The report also proposed a radical reform of the way the privatised railways are regulated to give passengers more power, better services and safer trains.

It concluded that the sell-off of the old nationalised system was a disappointment. "It is clear that the privatised passenger railway has not yet performed significantly better than British Rail," the committee said.

"We are disappointed that the train operators' performance has shown no general improvement over the last year, and on half of routes has actually declined."

A safety authority should be set up to oversee the scrapping of old, slam-door trains and the introduction of new train safety measures, said the committee. Passenger watchdog groups should be made much more powerful and have at least one representative on the Government's proposed Strategic Rail Authority.

But Eric Pickles, the Tory leader on the committee, preferred to concentrate on the "successes" of private operators adding: "This has seen a rise in passenger numbers."

Carey's flight of fancy takes him closer to the heavens



High-flyer: The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, taking to the skies in a Harrier jump-jet during a visit to RAF Wittering in Cambridgeshire, yesterday. Travelling at up to 500mph, the Archbishop, who is head of RAF chaplains, flew an hour's sortie across Britain

Prison officers accused of brutality and racial abuse

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

REPORTS that inmates at a jail have been systematically and brutally beaten by a group of about 20 prison officers are to be investigated in a major inquiry, it was announced yesterday.

Officers at Wormwood Scrubs jail, west London, are also accused of racially abusing black inmates in one of the most serious sets of allegations to be levelled against prison staff for many years.

The Prison Service yesterday announced an investigation into the "very serious" charges.

Among the allegations contained in a dossier compiled by solicitors representing 11 prisoners is a statement by a man on remand awaiting trial, which reads: "One of the officers stamped on my head and I blacked out. When the officer who had taken me to the block saw that blood was coming out of my right ear I was taken to the hospital."

Another convicted inmate claims: "They threw me on the ground and flung my head on the wall. There was about 10 minutes of beating." In a third case, officers are alleged to have grabbed an inmate by the throat and kicked and beat him

until he urinated. A fourth inmate said he was handcuffed and kicked.

A total of eight prisoners, five of whom are black, have made allegations of assaults, and a further three have given witness statements. More than 20 officers have been accused of brutality. A spokesman for the solicitors, Hickman and Rose, said they expected more inmates to come forward. Daniel Machover, partner in the firm, said one prisoner claimed he had been beaten up by staff almost every day for a month. "I would say the allegations in that case amount to torture."

The alleged assaults date

back to October 1996 up until Monday. All those complaining are still in jail.

Mr Machover said one of his clients, held in Wormwood Scrubs, appeared in court with "serious injuries" apparently sustained in the prison at the weekend.

The Prison Service set up the inquiry two days after the solicitors' complaint. Sir David Ramsbottom, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, said:

"A year ago I was told about the 'illegal use of force' at the west London jail. He noted: 'We found nothing to support this during the inspection

but we are left with the question why such a strong rumour should be passed around.' He also said he was 'surprised and horrified' by conditions there, and he found 'outraged staff attitudes to be prevailing everywhere, appearing to resist change at every turn'.

Tony Pearson, Prison Service deputy director-general, said: "I have instructed a senior and experienced governor from outside of the region to undertake a full inquiry into whether the allegations can be substantiated."

Mark Healy, chairman of the Prison Officers' Association, said his members would co-operate with the inquiry.

Blood alert for hospital chiefs

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

ALL HOSPITALS are being asked to review their procedures for handling blood after a study revealed 169 cases in which errors had been made, putting patients at risk.

In 12 cases, patients died and in a further 39 suffered serious injury requiring treatment in intensive care or dialysis for kidney failure.

The findings are contained in the first annual report by the Serious Hazards of Transfusion group (SHOT) set up by professional groups independently of the National Blood Service to monitor the safety of blood transfusion.

About 3 million blood transfusions are carried out each year, the vast majority without problems, but when problems do occur they tend to follow a pattern, the SHOT committee said. The commonest error, accounting for almost half the cases, was a mix-up in which blood intended for one patient was given to another. Blood for transfusions has to be carefully matched to avoid triggering a serious reaction.

There have been a series of scares about the safety of blood for transfusion in the UK involving fears about possible contamination and transmission of viruses including HIV and hepatitis. The results of the SHOT study revealed three cases of bacterial contamination — one because the donor's arm had not been properly cleaned — and five in which an infection was transmitted: hepatitis A, B and C, HIV and malaria.

Three of the infections, including that with HIV, occurred as a result of donations during the "window" period — after the donor had been infected but before it showed up in routine tests.

Dr Lorna Williamson, chair of the SHOT working group, said new tests were being developed to reduce the window period during which infections were undetectable. "We are dealing with very rare events but it is important that hospitals are still vigilant," she said.

TOMORROW

32- pages of film and music in THE EYE

■ Quentin Tarantino and The Man From UNCLE

■ Bob Hoskins, down and out in Twentyfourseven

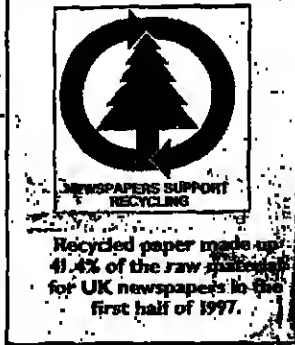
■ PP Arnold: from Ikette to soul survivor

■ Single mothers: Hollywood's latest superstars

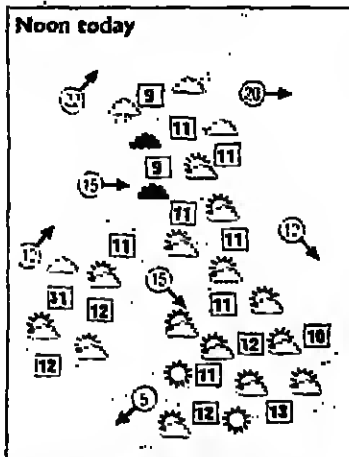


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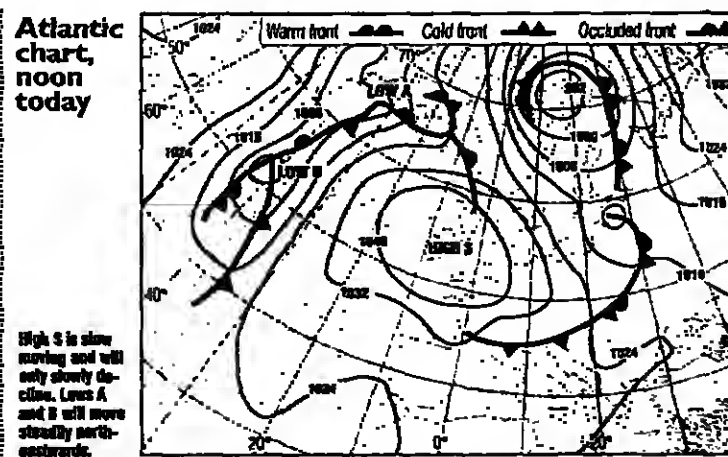
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WEATHER



Northern Scotland will be mostly cloudy and grey with some occasional rain and drizzle. Southern Scotland and Northern Ireland should stay dry and mild with a little sunshine to the east of high ground. Meanwhile, England and Wales will be fine and settled again with any early fog soon lifting to leave banks of cloud and some good sunny spells, especially away from North Sea coasts where the sunshine will be rather hazy. It will be mild everywhere for March with the highest temperatures in southern England.

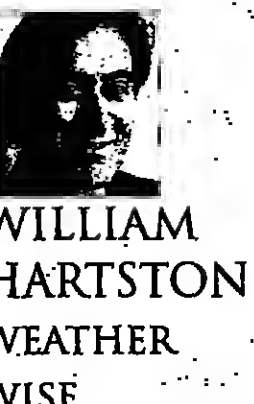


British Isles weather
Outlook available from above chart. Low Cloudy: Clear Fair: Fog: High: Heavy: Moderate: Rain: S: Sunny: Slight: Showers: Strong: Thunder: Wind: Variable

Aberdeen	C 9-10	Bristol	F 15-16	Birmingham	C 11-12	Newcastle	F 10-10
Angley	C 11-12	Cardiff	F 12-14	Liverpool	F 8-10	Oxford	C 12-14
Ayr	C 9-10	Carlisle	C 10-11	Leeds	C 11-12	Plymouth	C 12-14
Belfast	S 10-10	Dover	F 12-14	London	C 11-12	Southampton	C 12-14
Birmingham	F 12-14	Edinburgh	S 9-10	Manchester	F 14-15	Stoke	C 13-15
Bournemouth	F 13-15	Exeter	F 13-15	Nottingham	F 14-15	Stoke	C 13-15
Brighton	C 12-14	Glasgow	S 8-10	Sheffield	C 12-14	Torquay	S 11-12

World weather

Abuja	F 11-17	Frankfurt	C 10-10	Harare	F 10-11
Accra	F 11-17	Geneva	C 10-10	Heidelberg	F 10-11
Aden	F 11-17	London	C 10-10	Helsinki	F 10-11
Algiers	F 11-17	Madrid	C 10-10	Hong Kong	F 10-11
Amman	F 11-17	Moscow	C 10-10	Houston	F 10-11
Ankara	F 11-17	Nairobi	C 10-10	Indianapolis	F 10-11
Antananarivo	F 11-17	Rangoon	C 10-10	Istanbul	F 10-11
Apia	F 11-17	Reykjavik	C 10-10	Jakarta	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17	Rome	C 10-10	Johannesburg	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17	Sao Paulo	C 10-10	Khartoum	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17	Seoul	C 10-10	Kuala Lumpur	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17	Shanghai	C 10-10	Lima	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17	Singapore	C 10-10	Lisbon	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17	Sydney	C 10-10	London	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17	Taipei	C 10-10	Los Angeles	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17	Tokyo	C 10-10	Manila	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17	Yokohama	C 10-10	Mexico City	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17	Zurich	C 10-10	Mumbai	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17			Nairobi	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17			San Francisco	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17			Sao Paulo	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17			Seoul	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17			Shanghai	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17			Singapore	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17			Sydney	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17			Taipei	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17			Tokyo	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17			Yokohama	F 10-11
Asmara	F 11-17			Zurich	F 10-11



OUR weather in the second half of this week is being dominated by an anti-cyclone (high pressure area) that yesterday settled directly above Britain. In the summer, we often think of high pressure as a portent of fine weather, but at other times of year, the situation is far less clear.

High pressure means heavier air, and there are two main

things that can bring that about. First, cold air is denser than warm air, and second, dry air is heavier than damp air (since the specific gravity of water vapour is only about two-thirds that of air). So an area of high pressure may correspond to cold air, or dry air, or both.

This doesn't sound like a recipe for guaranteed fine weather, but there is another important process involved with anticyclones that does have a warming effect. In a summer anti-cyclone, air is piled up in the troposphere by high altitude winds. As the air descends, it is compressed by the pressure of the air above it, and it warms as the compression energy is converted to heat. (This is the process known as adiabatic warming.) Under such conditions, clouds tend to disappear as the air warms, resulting in fine, sunny summer days — though the chilling effect of the upper, cold air makes occasional thunderstorms also characteristic.

In summer, high pressure areas are usually formed of maritime tropical or continental tropical air. The winter anticyclone is a different beast, more likely resulting from continental polar wind. Its cooling effect can easily lead to cloud and fog.

Yesterday, in the South-east, we saw a beautifully clear and bright morning, but by lunchtime the sky had completely clouded over. This is again quite typical of some sorts of anticyclonic weather. What happens is that turbulence near ground level, caused by the land being warmed by the sun, and the air at ground level being warmed by the land and rising, lifts moist air high enough to condense and form cloud.

The main characteristic of high pressure, however, at whatever time of year, is its tendency to lead to stable weather conditions. High pressure areas, consisting of heavy air, are more difficult to budge than their flimsy low pressure colleagues.

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DELL

Experts approve genetically altered tomatoes

By Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

GENETICALLY engineered tomatoes are today expected to be approved by government experts for sale in tins.

Tinned tomatoes are Britain's top-selling canned food and the leading UK drugs and seeds group Zeneca is seeking Europe-wide approval for marketing a range of tinned tomato products using GMO — genetically modified organism —

tomatoes. Its application to a British expert committee is the first step.

Canned tomatoes are an essential ingredient in millions of British kitchens. We eat 230,000 tons of them, worth some £160m, a year.

The Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes will consider Zeneca's bid the day after the frozen food chain Iceland announced that from 1 May it would use no GMO-derived ingredients in its "own label" groceries.

GMO products are made by tak-

ing DNA, the hereditary chemical, from one plant, animal or micro-organism and transferring it into another. They are found in more and more of the food on supermarket shelves. Iceland wants to be known as the only big food retailer offering consumers a choice.

The advisory committee has already considered Zeneca's application in detail, and will have a final report today. The GMO tomato, so far grown only in California, is already on sale as purée, sold by Safeway and Sainsbury, where it has taken half the market. The purée, labelled as coming from GMO fruit, is cheaper than ordinary kinds.

The long-life Zeneca tomato, known as TGT7-E, stays firm for longer after ripening, both on the stalk and after being picked. That makes it more resistant to moulds and better suited for highly mechanised farming and food processing.

The new property is passed from generation to generation through the seeds. The gene that confers it blocks the production of an enzyme that plays a key role in making ripe tomatoes go mushy.

The gene, a synthetic copy of a normal tomato gene, was attached to some bacterial DNA including a gene conferring resistance to an antibiotic, kanamycin. Then the collection of genes was permanently stitched into the tomato's own DNA.

The Government's advisory committee of 16 experts, mostly university professors, has accepted Zeneca's argument that its canned

tomatoes will be just as safe and nutritious as the ordinary kind. It has heard evidence that the intense heat used in peeling and then sterilising GMO tomatoes kills any seeds and effectively destroys the antibiotic resistance.

Zeneca said it would sell GMO canned tomatoes in the European Union only if it was allowed to grow them on the continent too, in southern nations such as Spain. It has applied for the necessary EU approval. To market a GMO food in

Europe a company first needs approval in principle from one member state — and Zeneca has chosen Britain. That approval then applies across the EU, provided no other nations raise safety doubts which can be made to stick.

Zeneca says it will insist that the labels on the cans of tomato declare the contents as a GMO. "We want to be very open about this, to ensure we bring people along with us," said Nigel Poole, the company's regulatory affairs manager.



Benjamin Netanyahu: 'The hunger, the willingness to wage war, get dirty'

Photograph: Reuters

Political streetfighter who gets his retaliation in first

IN THE NEWS

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU

NOBODY IS quicker at spotting a tactical advantage. "Get your retaliation in first", runs the old Ulster political adage of which Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, would approve, writes Patrick Cockburn in Jerusalem.

This explains the Israeli leader's explosive response when Robin Cook shook the hand of a well-known Palestinian during a visit to the Israeli settlement at Har Homa, called by Palestinians Jebel Abu Ghneim, in south-east Jerusalem. He said Britain had broken its promise that "there would be no contact with Palestinians in relation to that place".

The incident was typical. First of all, his claim was fairly demonstrably untrue. David Manning, the British ambassador, patiently explained that he had reached no prior agreement with Israel on who Mr Cook should shake hands with.

But the Israeli leader's purpose in manufacturing a confrontation with Mr Cook was clear. The US is on the verge of launching an initiative to revive the peace process. By opening fire on Mr Cook, who spoke warmly of the coming US proposals, Mr Netanyahu was sending a message that he will resist American pressure for an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

It is by such manoeuvres that Mr Netanyahu made himself first leader of the Israeli right and then Prime Minister of Israel in 1996. But he is more than an able tactician. He has a relentless will to win.

"That is what counts," said Nahum Barnea, an Israeli columnist, "the hunger. The willingness to wage war, get dirty, to stick to the goals wholeheartedly".

Born in Israel in 1949, Mr Netanyahu comes from a family on the far right. His father Ben-Zion Netanyahu, a historian of the Spanish Inquisition, went into self-imposed exile in the US because he believed

THE WIFE

Sara, Mr Netanyahu's third wife (below), has had a lot to put up with. In 1993, during his election campaign for the leadership of the Likud Party, her husband appeared on TV to contest an advisory judicial panel's political opponents were threatening to blackmail him by releasing a "hot video" showing him in a compromising position with his girlfriend. Sara achieved notoriety by refusing to take calls from the Israeli Prime Minister. Mr Netanyahu said the White House thought there were two Saddam Husseins in the Middle East: one in Iraq and the other, himself, in Israel. But he has strong support in the US media and in the US Jewish community. He has successfully cultivated leaders of the Republican majority in Congress. He believes, probably rightly, that he can thwart any US effort aimed at forcing him to implement the Oslo accords with the Palestinians.



Instead, he waited. Palestinian bombs exploded on buses. Mr Netanyahu united the disparate forces of the right, from newly-arrived Russian immigrants to the black-coated ultra-Orthodox. He was also favoured by his opponents' visible contempt for his abilities. On election night he won by a few thousand votes.

US CONNECTION

At one time, President Clinton was said to be refusing to take calls from the Israeli Prime Minister. Mr Netanyahu said the White House thought there were two Saddam Husseins in the Middle East: one in Iraq and the other, himself, in Israel. But he has strong support in the US media and in the US Jewish community. He has successfully cultivated leaders of the Republican majority in Congress. He believes, probably rightly, that he can thwart any US effort aimed at forcing him to implement the Oslo accords with the Palestinians.

his views prevented him getting an appropriate academic job. From school in Philadelphia, and later Harvard University, Benjamin returned to Israel for his military service, during which he became a commando. The impetus for his political career came when his brother Jonathan was killed in the Entebbe raid in 1976, rescuing hostages from a hijacked plane.

After a brief stint marketing furniture, Mr Netanyahu was sent to the Israeli embassy in Washington. During the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 he began to show his expertise as a propagandist. Promoted to be Israeli ambassador to the UN, he appeared on American television so often that a poll showed many Americans thought he was their own UN representative.

After returning to Israel he fought a fierce campaign to become leader of the right-wing Likud Party in 1993. Three years later he survived what might have been the death blow to any other politician. He had whipped up opposition to the 1993 Oslo Accords with the Palestinians by attacks

on Yitzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister. When Mr Rabin was assassinated in 1995 his widow Leah refused to shake hands with Mr Netanyahu.

A quick election after the assassination might have finished him. Instead, his opponents waited. In 1996 he became Prime Minister by a few thousand votes. His election provoked a debate in Israel and across the world about his political character. Was he an ideologue or a pragmatist? The answer, which should have been evident from his writings, is that he is an ideological man of great practical intelligence and flexibility.

Ostensibly, he supports the Israeli-Palestinian Oslo accords. In practice he has largely refused to implement them. He is always prepared to talk while Israeli settlements continue to be established in the West Bank. He believes, perhaps rightly, that if he shows himself combative enough he can strangle any peace initiative in its cradle. Hence his reaction to Mr Cook's handshake at Har Homa.

Cook's tour, page 14

Football chiefs who behaved badly grovel to the people of Newcastle

By Steve Boggan

TWO Newcastle Football Club directors who called women of the North-east "dogs", boasted at whoring their way around the world, and mocked their fans for buying replica kits at inflated prices, made a grovelling apology yesterday.

Club chairman Freddy Shepherd and vice-chairman Douglas Hall, said their comments, published in the *News of the World*, were "totally out of character". But, deciding that discretion was the better part of valour, they stayed away from last night's home match against Crystal Palace, arguing that their presence would be a "distraction".

The duo said they were taking legal advice over suing the newspaper, which recorded their comments at a brothel in Marbella, but its editor, Phil Hall, said any attempt to sue would "result in the most spectacular High Court case in years".



Brought into dispute: Freddy Shepherd and Douglas Hall



In the North-east, many fans had expected the statement to be more of a denial than an apology. The fact that it was not was expected to lead to demonstrations at last night's match.

The club has been in turmoil since the publication of the men's comments on Sunday. They boasted of hiring prostitutes, of the vast sums of

money they made from merchandising and of how they found their star striker Alan Shearer so boring that they nicknamed him "Mary Poppins".

Anger among fans manifested itself in the form of sarcasm last night as 40,000 Geordies used humour to get their message across. During the match, thousands of supporters

planned to throw their replica jerseys on to the pitch, women were preparing to bark instead of cheer, and the fans planning to keep their shirts on had replaced the name-tag "Shearer" with "Poppins".

The directors' statement claimed the newspaper had "sensationalised" their comments during a meeting which it had set up, something the editor denied. It went on: "Douglas Hall and Freddy Shepherd sincerely apologise for any offence that has been caused to members of their families, the fans of Newcastle United, the people of the North-east and their fellow directors. They particularly apologise to the women of the North-east."

"Whilst their behaviour has been called into question by the *News of the World*, they in turn are entitled to a full explanation from the *News of the World* concerning the way in which the meeting was dishonestly set up

by that newspaper and the way in which it was then reported."

Phil Hall said no "set-up" was involved. He said the newspaper simply received a tip-off about the men's behaviour and the likely location. A reporter was dispatched and secret video and audio tapes were made.

"This isn't a proper apology," he said. "It sounds more as if they feel sorry for themselves instead of the fans who they've been ripping off." He said the newspaper was planning to follow up the story with revelations that would "blow the lid off Newcastle" on Sunday.

More than 90 per cent of callers to a Newcastle radio phone-in said the men should resign. But Newcastle United plc said it would be inappropriate to take action until the legal position was clarified. Adidas, which makes Newcastle's replica jerseys, denied that they are made abroad for £5 and sold on at £50. They were made in the UK for

Exquisite books and manuscripts should stay put, say peers

A GROUP of peers and leading arts figures is fighting to prevent a collection of early printed books and manuscripts being moved to the British Library from George IV being moved to the new St Pancras building, writes Clare Garner.

Since 1829, the collection has been housed in the King's Library, a magnificent room specifically designed for that purpose by Sir Robert Smirke.

Resplendent with brass railings, glazed bookcases and oak flooring inlaid with mahogany, the 300ft gallery is considered to be one of the finest library rooms in the world.

The King's Library comprises 65,250 books and 20,000 pamphlets, as well as more than 400 manuscripts and one of the world's earliest collections of maps, globes and fossils. The British Library is intent on re-

moving the collection from its original home. It has already shifted one tenth of the collection to St Pancras and plans to complete the transfer by 3 April.

A statement from the British Library insists the transfer is "in accordance with the terms of the gift". The statement continues: "In the new building, the King's Library will be housed in the best possible conditions for its preservation and use."

However, campaigners feel that the glass tower in which the books are soon to be housed will not do the collection justice and are pressing for a debate in parliament. Lord Norwich, a broadcaster and author, said yesterday: "The King's Library is an extraordinary building and an extraordinary institution. Two things which were made for each other will be separated. That is always very sad."

George Sayn, who organises exhibitions on architecture and urban planning and is co-ordinating the campaign, said: "We don't just dismantle our history every 200 years just because a new building comes along. Furthermore, we now live in the age of computers. People can easily find out if a book's in the British Museum [where the King's Library is situated] and go there."

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Students staying at home to save money

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

ONE IN six students would have been unlikely to go to university if they had been required to pay tuition fees, says a survey published today.

Among students from poorer families, the proportion rose to more than a quarter.

Students will have to pay £1,000 a year tuition fees towards the cost of their courses from September.

While applications overall are down by 2.9 per cent, new figures in *The Independent's* "Education+" show there have been clear winners and losers in the applications race. Some universities have seen them increase by nearly 40 per cent while others are facing a fall of nearly 20.

Those with the biggest in-

creases are Thames Valley University, Bath, Huddersfield, Staffordshire, Lancaster, University of the West of England and Bristol.

The biggest losers are East Anglia, Dundee, Abertay, Nottingham Trent, Plymouth and the private university of Buckingham.

While there is little pattern in the application trends, universities in more isolated spots such as Exeter and East Anglia, tend to have fared badly. That suggests that more students may be deciding to live at home to save money.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service is investigating the findings.

Applications to London colleges and its new universities are holding up well despite the high cost of living in the capital.

The survey of final-year students asked if they would have taken up their courses if they had been liable for fees. Among students from lower-income families receiving means-tested maintenance grants 26 per cent said they would either "definitely not" or would have been unlikely to do so.

Students were also asked if they would have gone to university if they had thought that they would leave college with debts of £10,000 or more. Because grants are being phased out alongside the introduction of fees, that is the size of the debt to be expected by students from poorer families. Around 40 per cent said that they would have been at least "unlikely" to take up their courses.

Researchers also questioned students about their lifestyle. The survey of 6,349 final-year

students at 19 top universities by High Fliers Research, a student and graduate market research company, shows that students have an impressive array of technological equipment.

More than half has a television, one in four has a video and one in three a personal computer. One in six has a mobile phone and one in six a games machine. Two-thirds thought that cannabis was an acceptable drug for personal use.

However, the students - who are all at universities demanding high entry qualifications including Oxford and Cambridge - have lowbrow tastes in television programmes. Their favourite television shows are *EastEnders*, *Friends*, *Men Behaving Badly*, *The Simpsons* and *Shooting Stars*.



Purse strings: Mary Shittu, left, and Jumoke Oyadare decided to study in London to save money Photograph: Rul Xavier

When the price of a degree is cheapest option

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

LIVING at home is the norm for undergraduates at the University of North London, where the high cost of living tests student finances to the limit.

Student leaders estimate it costs at least £6,000 to live within reach of the university's Islington campus, even before the introduction of £1,000 a year tuition fees.

Aidan McDoonald, the student union president, moved to the university from Birmingham, but said many others simply could not afford to study without help at home from their families. He estimates that up to 70 per cent of students at the university live at home. "Living at home will save students thousands of pounds because it costs £2,000 a year to live in a hall of residence, but there are many more savings," he said.

"When people make the decision to come to college the cost of living is one of the key factors. When I came I had to be sure that I had a job and was financially stable."

Mr McDoonald said fees would affect students, but there

was more concern over the loss of maintenance grants, which would hit the large mature student population.

In the library, students working for their summer exams acknowledged that the cost of living in London was a big problem. Many said the financial burden of living in the capital might have put them off university education. But they insisted that living at home did have its compensations.

Jumoke Oyadare, a second-year marketing and business student, said: "I live at home because it's cheap. And it's a lot easier to be at home. I concentrate better and I study better."

Andrew Prophet, also studying marketing and business, lives with his family in Morden, south-west London. "I would have moved away if I could, but it's not worth it," he said. "All you have to pay for if you live at home is your transport."

Deema Bharkhda, a third-year law student, moved away from Leicester to study in London, despite the cost. "I wanted a change," she said. "London was one of the places which excited me. It is very expensive but it is worth it for the life."

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British motorists face an expensive future

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

DRIVERS will face bigger bills in the coming years as the Government attempts to unclog city streets and curb growing pollution.

Tuesday's Budget - which mixed petrol price hikes with a cash boost for public transport - demonstrated the benefits for ministers of pursuing such a strategy, bringing in more than £1bn in extra taxes and delivering environmental benefits.

Gavin Strang, the transport minister, described it as the "most far-reaching package of measures to promote cleaner vehicles and fuels the country had seen". Economists were quick to point out that drivers had ensured the Budget was fiscally neutral. "Along with cutting relief for the married couple's allowance and smokers, motorists paid for it," said Paul

Johnson, deputy director of the Institute of Fiscal Studies.

Petrol went up by more than 5p a litre - costing the motorist an extra £60 a year on average, and the Chancellor criticised the oil companies for not passing on the drop in world-wide fuel prices. This has bought an immediate response. BP the oil giant, cut the cost of petrol by 2p a litre in rural areas.

But for Britain's drivers, the devil is in the detail. Although from next year will see a new £100 tax disc for the "smallest and cleanest cars", no upper limit has been set a possible excise duty for gas guzzlers. This could see huge increases for those motorists who choose to use huge-engined cars.

This "graduated" duty is the norm on the Continent. Drivers of the Suzuki Swift - the most fuel efficient car on the road - would only pay £66 in road tax

in Belgium. However, a motorist in Brussels who drives a Ferrari F50 - which manages a mere 10.6 mpg - pays £1080.

Company car owners also thought they had escaped with just a phasing out of their free fuel subsidy. This will cost the executive with a two-litre Mercedes £150 extra a year and will raise more than £500m by 2001 for the public purse.

"We are looking to encourage the production of fuel-efficient vehicles. Fuel duty increases and changing excise duty schemes will encourage that," said a civil servant.

But in the small print lurks another change for company car users. The Government quietly announced a review of the tax breaks which provide "a perverse incentive to drive extra business miles".

More measures are sure to follow in this May's transport

White Paper. This will include proposals which could see councils fining motorists who spew fumes into the atmosphere as well as charging drivers for entering congested town centres.

A leaked draft of the paper showed ministers will introduce a tax, to be collected by local authorities, on "private non-residential parking", mainly staff car parks provided free by employers or customer spaces offered by shops. A ministerial aide said that unless current policies were changed "it would be difficult" to meet the air quality standards for 2005 set by the previous administration.

This has not impressed the motoring lobby. The AA took out full page newspaper adverts today to question the Government's agenda. "The Chancellor talks of fairness and that must mean motorists get what they pay for," reads the ad.



Single parents will have to wait until April next year to receive their second extra premium

Photograph: John Voos

Tobacco tax
delay anger
health lobb

By Andrew Brown
Tobacco tax
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Blunkett pled

By Colin Brown
DAVID Blunkett
pled to delay
the implementation
of the tobacco tax
increase. He said
that the increase
was necessary but
that it would be
implemented in
the next few
months.

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Year of struggle before lone parents receive benefit bonus

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

LONE PARENTS claiming for the first time will have to wait a year before the value of last year's benefits cuts is replaced, putting many in financial hardship, campaigners warned last night.

Benefit for new claimants was cut in December but the Government said that moves in the Budget to increase other benefits would replace the money lost by lone parents.

But campaigners said last night that delays in introducing those rises mean that the mothers will have to wait until April 1999 before they are on a par with other parents - a year in which both they and their children will face hardship.

Last December the Government pushed through the controversial benefit cuts for lone parents, sparking rebellion and a ministerial resignation. The cuts, proposed by the previous Conservative government, left lone parents on income support £4.65 a week worse off.

"This is quite serious if you are a lone parent on income support," said Margaret Crear, policy officer for Gingerbread who is urging the Government to halt the benefit cuts. "We are talking about new claimants here but new claimants tend to be mothers who have just had babies or just separated with all the upheaval that brings

and it is pretty expensive." Maevie Sherlock of the National Council of One Parent Families said: "It may sound like small sums but if you are on less than £100 a week it is huge. If the Government had the courage of its convictions it would do something about this and defer the cuts until next year."

If a lone parent has a child under 11, he or she will receive an extra £2.50 per week in November with the new under-11 child rate. But they will have to wait until the following April to receive another £2.50 per week in family premiums.

"Basically they won't get the reinstatement for a year," Ms Crear said. "It doesn't add up. The Government promised that no low income families would be worse off because of the Budget, but lone parents on income support are going to be worse off for a year. This is a big amount for lone parents. Those on income support are amongst the poorest people in the population. More than 30 per cent of them live in severe hardship - that means they don't have enough food for clothing and food."

"So when you are talking about £2.50 - £5 you are talking about food for their child. By next year it may be all right but this is a year out of their life and a year in their child's development and you can't replace that."

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Tobacco tax delay angers health lobby

By Anthony Bevis
Political Editor

A SURPRISE delay in slapping extra tax on cigarettes could cost the Exchequer a packet – of more than £600m in lost revenues.

But Customs and Excise said yesterday that the decision to stall for more than seven months the extra 21p duty and tax on 20 cigarettes was a "hangover" from the old November Budgets, when Kenneth Clarke had increased tobacco duty from 1 December.

Similarly, Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has held back the increase in drink – a penny on a pint of beer and 4p on a bottle of wine – until New Year's Day, 1999.

That timing had been settled by Mr Clarke in his November Budget because he did not wish to be dubbed a "Scrooge" for putting extra duties on drink in time for Christmas.

But the distinction between the immediate, overnight increase in petrol duty, and the extra tax "holiday" for tobacco, will disturb the health lobby.

December's increase in duty amounts to 5 per cent in real terms – over and above inflation – because "the Government maintains its commitment to protecting health".

Last year's July Budget increase was also stalled until December, and it was estimated that in addition to "lost" revenue of £300m, the Chancellor had handed the manufacturers ample time to maximise production and profits in advance of the tax hike.

A spokesman for Customs and Excise yesterday played down any suggestion of lost revenue. Treasury calculations show a

remorselessly steady increase in the tax "take" from tobacco, up from £88m in 1996-97 to £8.9m in the coming year.

But the yield from next December's increase in duty will be £25m for the rest of the new financial year – compared with a full year yield of £710m in 1999-2000.

As for any suggestion of profiteering on the back of the delayed increase, Customs and Excise said that there was always stockpiling of cigarettes and tobacco in advance of a tax increase. "That is what happens every year, anyway," the spokesman said. "That is a fact of life."

But John Carlisle, the former Conservative MP who now works for the Tobacco Manufacturers' association, told *The Independent* that the delayed increase in duty was "a sort of crumb of comfort for me and my industry, and the poor smoker."

"Like last year, it seems to be creating a precedent as to the time the duty goes up, but from our point of view it won't make any difference to the basic problem; that the smuggler will be delighted by the news that the price is going up by that amount in the future."

He said there were limits on how much the manufacturers could produce and stockpile.

"Yes, there is always stockpiling by retailers, but they have to pay the full price, and therefore cannot do all that much." There was also a certain amount of stockpiling by smokers, too.

But he added: "Probably, it pushes consumption up a bit because people tend to store stuff and if it's there, they are tempted to smoke it."



Smoke screen: A delay on levying new duty could cost the Exchequer £600m Photograph: Reuters

Housing comes before job guidance for young homeless

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

THE first signs of dissension from voluntary agencies delivering the Government's New Deal programme emerged yesterday over a plan to provide "mentors" and other extra help to the most disadvantaged young people.

The Centrepoint charity, which provides housing for people at risk, commended the mentoring system, but said the most urgent need was for reform of the benefits system to help provide housing.

The "foster" movement which provides accommodation and help for the homeless, yesterday said that while the £50m in additional funds was welcome, an insufficient percentage was coming its way.

Carolyn Hayman, chief executive of the Foyers' Federation, said that it should be given full responsibility for helping its own residents to take advantage of New Deal.

Ms Hayman said members of her organisation were best placed to help the people they knew. In some areas, however, foyers were only given about £180 for each individual on New Deal out of an average £400 or more spent on preparing young people for the scheme through the so-called Gateway process.

"For heaven's sake we have been helping to get homeless people into work for years," said Ms Hayman, who added that too much money was channelled by local partnerships through Training and Enterprise Councils.

Part of the extra £50m, announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in Tuesday's Budget, will be spent on a "mentoring" service for the 18- to 24 year-olds on New Deal. Under the system volunteers from busi-



Gordon Brown: Announced 'New Deal' mentoring funds

nesses, charities, churches and ethnic minority organisations will act as personal advisers or "buddies" to the most needy participants on the programme.

Under the plan up to 100,000 young people will be offered the support of trained mentors over the life of this Parliament, according to David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment.

Victor Adeniyi, chief executive of Centrepoint, said his organisation already provided residents with mentors where they were needed.

"Homeless young people tell us that it's very difficult to get and maintain full-time work without a place to iron clothes or get a good night's sleep. For many homeless young people a mentoring scheme is not a priority. A safe place to live and help to maintain accommodation is the first step," he said.

Other elements of the extra £50m will help to provide basic skills courses and there will be increased access to specialist help to tackle such problems as alcohol and drug dependency, homelessness and debt.

Employment Service managers report that one of the biggest problems encountered by young people hoping to take jobs is the mountain of debt they have built up.

Blunkett pledges £100m to cut class sizes

By Colin Brown

DAVID Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, will today announce a £100m allocation to improve and extend school buildings to meet Labour's election pledge to reduce class sizes. It is being portrayed by the Government as the downpayment in a massive

spending shift towards education and health from defence and other Whitehall budgets.

The money, part of the £250m windfall for education from the Budget, will be used to replace temporary classrooms and it is expected that some will be targeted at rural areas. Around £100m of the Budget increase for education

was allocated for training and computer projects, with around £40m for education in Wales and Northern Ireland.

Mr Blunkett has been arguing for more money from the Treasury to meet Labour's election pledges on education. He is looking for a much bigger increase in his budget from the comprehensive spending

review across all Whitehall departments.

A ministerial source said education needed billions of pounds more to enable the Government to meet its general election promise to spend more of Britain's wealth on education than the Tories.

Ministers are expecting much of the money to come

from cancelled or delayed defence contracts.

Tony Blair gave a clear hint yesterday that he is planning to meet Labour's pledges to the voters on education and health by promising year-on-year increases for the remainder of the Parliament.

A rolling programme of investment could enable ministers

to promise an extra £200 year on year for the next three years for health, and a similar big boost for education.

The Prime Minister told MPs that he wanted to get into a cycle "where investment carries on year on year so we can get away from the situation under the Tories from spurts in spending followed by cuts."

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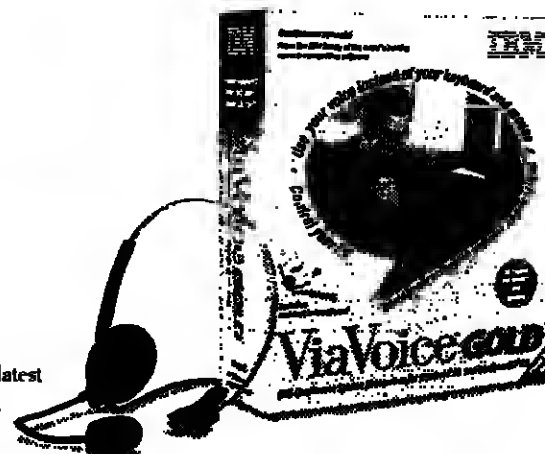
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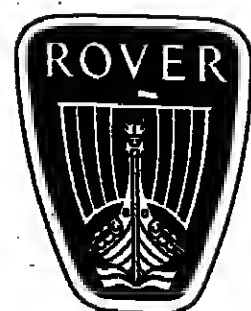
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FBI expert
has clue to
Mardi Gra
identity

Inquiry launched into
plane nosewheel collapse

Ten held over Mardi Gras

Counterfeit gang

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FBI expert has clue to Mardi Gra identity

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

THE CRIMINOLOGIST who successfully compiled an offender profile of the American "Unabomber" believes the Mardi Gra terrorist, who has been responsible for a series of explosions in London, is likely to switch targets soon and will not stop even if he is paid extortion money.

Dr Bill Tafuya, a former FBI officer, also provided yesterday a description of the man he believes is behind the British bombings. He thinks he is probably in his mid 30s, feels undervalued, lives in London, has a boring job, and is motivated by attention. He believes Sainsbury's and Barclays Bank are being targeted, not for money, but because Mardi Gra thinks he was badly treated as a customer and bears a grudge.

It took the FBI nearly 20 years to capture the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski, who sent or delivered bombs that killed three people and injured two others. Kaczynski, 54, was jailed for life this year after the former mathematician and Harvard graduate was tracked down in 1996 to a cabin in Montana, following a tip off by his brother.

Dr Tafuya, who appeared yesterday at a conference in Manchester organised by the National Criminal Intelligence Service, said he thought the Mardi Gra bomber, who has detonated 34 small bullet devices in the past four years, was "dramatically different" to Kaczynski. "He is nowhere near as sophisticated," he said.

He told *The Independent*: "He is looking for attention, not money - that does not interest

him. He has almost certainly got a scrapbook with all the reports of what he has done. Getting money will not stop him.

"I think he will go for a different target soon. It could be some other organisation that he thinks has harmed him."

He added: "Mardi Gra may have been insulted by a check-out girl or a bag boy. He may have bought a bad chicken from Sainsbury - it could be that simple. He probably feels undervalued for his hard work and has a paranoia about someone trying to do him harm or insulting him."

The bombs, the latest of which was exploded in a plastic bag near a Sainsbury store in south-east London on Tuesday, are simply made and suggest the maker has a "menial job" such as caretaker or office worker, said Dr Tafuya.

The type of device used, which were first targeted against Barclays bank in 1994, also suggest the bomber may be a former military man or engineer, alternatively he may have belonged to a gun club, he added. He is likely to feel that he has "not got his just reward from life", probably dresses in a boring manner and does not look out of place in some of the poorer districts of London, Dr Tafuya believes.

Asked how police should best proceed to catch the bomber, he said they could re-examine the first few bombing incidents when he is mostly likely to have made mistakes. "They should look at them upside down and backwards."

Dr Tafuya noted that the FBI had ignored the offender profile of the Unabomber, which later proved to be accurate in several key areas.



Artists' impression: Models dressed by Yves Saint Laurent in the National Gallery room funded by the designer Photograph: Rui Xavier

High art joins high fashion

By Rachel Henry

MASTERPIECES from France and the Netherlands go on show together for the first time today as four rooms in the National Gallery open to the public, following a £4m restoration.

The Gallery raised the cost of this, the first of two renovation phases for its North Galleries, from the private sector - and more than half the funds came from France. The designer Yves Saint Laurent has supported the entire cost of the largest room (left) which houses 17th-century Paris paintings, including Philippe de Champaigne's portrait of Cardinal Richelieu. The Queen and the Queen Mother have also backed the project.

Neil MacGregor, director of the National Gallery, described the support as "an outstanding example of European co-operation". The second £4m phase is due to open in the autumn of next year.



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Inquiry launched into plane nosewheel collapse

AN investigation was under way last night into why the nosewheel of an aircraft suddenly collapsed shortly after it landed with 62 people on board. The 58 passengers and four crew escaped down emergency chutes on to the tarmac at Manchester Airport.

One passenger was taken to hospital with a broken ankle and another four were treated on the spot for minor injuries. Passengers on the 8.30am British Regional Airlines BA 7783 flight from Southampton later told how the ATP aircraft began shaking as the captain and first officer struggled to maintain control as the nosewheel collapsed. It slewed sideways across the runway and came to rest with its nose against the ground.

Ten held over Maze killing

AT LEAST 10 Loyalist Volunteer Force prisoners in the Maze jail were arrested and questioned by police yesterday about the killing of a murder suspect in the prison. The move came after detectives returned to the LVF wing of the jail where David Keys, 26, was found murdered on Sunday. He was one of four men remanded in custody, charged with the murder of two friends, in a Poyntzpass, Co Armagh, pub.

Counterfeit gang jailed

A GANG of forgers which planned to flood the economy with millions of pounds of fake banknotes during the European football championships was yesterday jailed for a total of 26 years. Glasgow men Thomas McAnea, 48 and Raymond Dean, 44, who masterminded the plot, were found guilty of counterfeiting and conspiracy to defraud charges and jailed for 10 years and eight-and-a-half years respectively. Three others were jailed for between one and five years. A sixth man was fined £1,000 after the eight-week trial.

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No hiding place for dangerous sex offenders

By Kim Sengupta

DETAILS about the whereabouts of paedophiles following their release from prison can be revealed to the public by the authorities, the Court of Appeal ruled in a landmark judgment yesterday.

The police and other government agencies will now be legally entitled to publicise where the freed sex offenders are living "to protect the public and in particular children", and the media will be allowed to name them.

The judgment comes just days after it was announced that up to 150 convicted sex offenders will be released from prison into the community without compulsory supervision. Six of those are said to be as potentially dangerous as child-killer Robert Oliver, who has already cost the public £100,000 in efforts to protect him from from vigilantes, and children from him.

Lord Woolf, Master of the Rolls, sitting with Lord Justice Schiemann and Lord Justice Robert Walker stressed, however, that "disclosure should only be made when there is a

pressing need", and urged that more should be done to find paedophiles appropriate accommodation after they had served their jail sentences.

The judges rejected an appeal by Peter and Christine Thorpe against a decision by North Wales police to release information about them. They also lifted an order preventing the media from naming the pair after being told that their present address was not known.

Mr Thorpe, 46, and his 42-year-old wife were described as "extremely dangerous people who will pose a considerable risk to children" in a report by Northumbria police. Both had left prison in July 1996 after serving seven years and four months of a 11-year sentence for the rape of a girl of 16, and a series of indecent assaults on young children.

Afterwards they had to flee from a series of places after local communities in the area became aware of their identity and crimes. The court was told the couple had co-operated with the authorities in the past, but they had now "gone to ground".

Giving judgment, Lord Woolf stated: "We agree with

a Divisional Court that the policy of North Wales police was not unlawful, nor was the action of the police in giving effect to that policy.

"The more recent guidance of the Home Secretary is an improvement on that policy. It is reassuring to know that the latest policy will be applied in the future. Regrettably recent experience has confirmed that while some former offenders' behaviour has changed after serving their sentence, other offenders retain the propensity to repeat their offending and if given the opportunity to do so, commit further offences of the same or similar nature".

Paul Cavadinio, principal officer of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, said the judgment was welcome because it allowed the police to give out information only when there was a pressing need to do so. "It will act as a valuable check on the way police forces decide whether to disclose sex offenders' identities to third parties. The court's emphasis on finding stable accommodation for released sex offenders is particularly welcome."



New Oyster cult: Nigel Coates at Earls Court with his 'energy-aware prototype for the expanding homes market'

Photograph: John Voos

Concept house takes flight for the future

By Nonie Niesewand

THE NEW kid on the block at the Ideal Home exhibition is guaranteed to cause the net curtains in the adjacent show houses to twitch. It is called the

Oyster by its architect Nigel Coates, but from some angles it looks more like a Stealth Bomber landed inside Earls Court.

With its cross-shaped deck and shallow oval pod upper-

storey perched above the all-glass ground floor, this family house for four owes more to the aircraft industry than a mollusc.

Although he is the professor of architecture at the Royal College of Art, and his list of clients includes the Foreign Office and the Department of Trade and Industry, Nigel Coates is not a name you would normally link with the relentlessly untrendy Ideal Home exhibition. But he likes to play to big audiences, and so he entered a competition sponsored by Blueprint called Concept House.

Coates' creation doesn't need gutters and soil pipes and any of those awkward plumbing pieces that might spoil the lift-off of its copper-clad roof. The copper will eventually verdigris which will soften its impact in the leafy suburbs where Coates hopes it will find a home. None of the show-

builders at the exhibition wanted to prototype it. Instead London Electricity helped get one off the ground to generate interest. If enough of the 500,000 people expected to visit this year's exhibition want to see one in their cut-de-sac, then it will be possible to manufacture components for on-site assembly. Coates estimates they could then sell for £100,000. "The idea is to make a fresh energy-aware prototype for the expanding homes market," he says.

The all-glass downstairs is panelled with sections of Privilex glass, which turn from clear to opaque at the flick of a switch. A liquid crystal coating activated by an electrical impulse makes the change.

Furnishing a round house used to be as easy as buying a water-bed and some pouffes. But that kind of Seventies suburban attitude wouldn't pass

Coates' style trial. Besides, he treats the space as a "soft oval". So he furnished it himself with straightforward easy pieces which are much more comfortable than they look to shatter a few myths about modern furniture.

Open-plan living can be exacting with two children. So Coates planned two staircases to turn the upstairs wing into two separate units.

Like all modernists, he is particular about soft furnishings. There are insulated shutters instead of floral curtains, while flimsy voile screens filter light indoors to provide surfaces for images beamed on them from LCD projectors which the architect calls "moving digital wallpaper". Downstairs, a sandy brown camouflage pattern called "Desert Storm" gives steel-corded the urban guerrilla.

The exhibition opens today.

Minister admits Dome cloud

THE Government yesterday admitted that there are "problems" over the use of powerful global warming gases in the Millennium Dome.

Michael Meacher, the environment minister, blamed lack of consultation over hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) in the air conditioning system for the current row. The result was that

the project was now up against a "very tight schedule".

Mr Meacher was speaking at the launch of a first business plan for UK environment industries in London amid protests about the "anti-green" nature of the controversial dome now being built on Greenwich Peninsula by the Thames in south-east London.

The Tories' environment spokesman, Tim Yeo, has urged John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, to act over the "dangers" of using greenhouse gases in the system.

The Government has pledged to cut greenhouse gases, with the European Union, by at least 8 per cent by 2010 as agreed at the Kyoto Summit.

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Britain to lose most EU aid to regions

By Katherine Butler
and Kim Sengupta

SOME of the poorest regions in the United Kingdom reacted with dismay yesterday at the prospect of losing hundreds of millions in European Union funding as Brussels announced a radical shake up of its aid programme.

London's protests about the scale of poverty in the United Kingdom were brushed aside yesterday as the European Commission unveiled proposals which would see British regions from Scotland to Cornwall deprived of massive shares of aid. Overall, the country could lose almost 80 per cent of the sum it gets at present.

Britain was also warned by commission president Jacques Santer, that its budget rebate negotiated by Baroness Thatcher in 1994 would have to be reviewed in the autumn when the European Union's next six-year spending plans come up for renegotiation.

The commission says that reform of the system under which £23bn is given to the regions was inevitable with the EU's decision to admit up to 10 power countries from Eastern Europe and Cyprus.

Detailed changes announced by European Union regional policy commissioner, Monika Wulf-Mathies, will see Northern Ireland and the Scottish Highlands and Islands disqualified from the priority aid bracket of which they currently enjoy after 1999. Because of improvements in living standards, they no longer pass the test that income per head is below 75 per cent of the EU average.

Merseyside will retain its claim for top rates of funding and for the first time South Yorkshire, which has sunk to levels of poverty on a par with eastern Germany, will see its share of aid doubled. But 13 regions with so-called "objective 2" status—areas of industrial decline—will see



Skye bridge, linking island to mainland. Under the new proposals, the Highlands and Islands will lose their priority aid bracket status

Photograph: AP

their funding slashed because unemployment will be the main yardstick of poverty and jobless rates in most UK regions have fallen.

Commissioners overruled demands from the British government to have gross domestic product per capita also included as one of the criteria. Low-paid jobs mean that income per head in many British regions is well below the EU average. A last-minute attempt by commis-

sion member Neil Kinnock to blunt the worst effect of the cuts provoked angry debate among his colleagues. In the end, Mr Kinnock limited the damage slightly by ensuring that the fall in the percentage of Britain's population covered by EU aid would be no greater than one-third, but he failed to secure the fall of just one-quarter that he wanted.

A lengthy round of negotiations between EU governments on the

share-out of a total package worth £126bn will now begin and could take up to a year with every member state besides Britain fighting for a better deal. The size of the aid cake is down 12 per cent on what it was in 1993 when negotiations last took place.

For the years of 1994 to 1999, Britain's share came to £9.7bn, £6.5bn of which went to regions in England, £1.3bn to Scotland, £636m

to Wales and £1.1m to Northern Ireland. But the British government points out that, despite being the fifth largest contributor to the EU budget, it is 11th in the league table when it comes to handouts.

EU officials say that it was "not realistic" for the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to come to Brussels to preach about his successes in tackling unemployment while at the same time claiming poverty levels

worse than those in Ireland. The President of the Board of Trade, Margaret Beckett, said last night that relying on unemployment to identify aid regions would be "unreliable and an unbalanced way of gauging regional deprivation. It would also be unfair to the UK which tends to have lower unemployment rates in equally poor areas". She vowed to negotiate for a "fair and affordable" deal during the negotiations.

'Computer in every home for millennium'

By Charles Arthur
Science Editor

A LABOUR MP came up with a new millennium target yesterday: a computer in every home, paid for by National Lottery funds.

Derek Wyatt said in a short debate on the Government's strategy for the Internet, that putting PCs into the UK's 23.5 million households for free by 2002 would "cost no more than the Millennium Dome—and be a better use of the cash." It would prepare children, who will soon all be guaranteed an email address at school, for a world in which "the Internet is the key to retooling and reskilling our society".

A typical home PC costs about £1,000, meaning it would take roughly £240m to provide every home with one. The funding for the Dome totals £700m.

Calling for the creation of a new "Ministry of Communications", Mr Wyatt said it should have six "Internet Czars" who would train all ministers, MPs and departments to ensure they can cope with the growing influence of the World Wide Web. The new ministry's brief would include responsibility for telecommunications, broadcast, regulation, software, post offices, village halls and the Internet.

He added: "If this Government sits on its Internet-free hands for much longer over this issue, any chance we have of creating a modern post industrial society will have been lost forever."

Currently, he said, the Internet is a more expensive pursuit than many others: the Media Intelligence Bureau has put the cost, including purchase of the computer, electricity, access and phone bill, at £3.87 per hour—compared with £1.67 for a trip to the movies and less than 12p per hour to watch free to air television.

His comments received backing from members, including Labour's John Manton, MP for Glasgow Cathcart. He said: "The state of Texas has now taken the decision that they are buying no more textbooks. Every child receives a laptop computer with an access to the Internet, so they get their information in that way. Isn't that the way we should be going forward in education in this country?"

Rural losers fear decline as Europe accused of moving the goalposts

BRITISH officials complained last night that the goalposts have been moved on regional aid, and the regions which had lost out complained the lack of aid could have grave economic consequences.

Ulster Unionist Euro MP Jim Nicholson said Northern Ireland is losing out on funding at a time when

it was desperately needed. He said: "If there is an opportunity for a different political climate and a return to a normal society in Northern Ireland, it's ridiculous that Brussels would deprive us of much needed funding at a time when we can move forward and create a level of employment which we haven't got."

Liberal Democrat rural affairs spokesman Charles Kennedy, whose Ross, Skye and Inverness constituency qualified for Objective 1 funding under the existing system, declared he was ready to fight to keep that status. He added his party would "underline the continuing vulnerability of our economic base".

Highlands Council convenor Peter Peacock said the European Union will be taking into account sparsity of city population when deciding which areas were eligible for the lucrative Objective 1 status. He continued: "That measure is presently eight persons per square kilometre, ours is nine persons per

square kilometre. We are certainly not giving up."

However, there were also winners. Under the new proposals South Yorkshire stands to gain up to £1.2bn.

Dennis MacShane, the Labour MP for Rotherham said: "This is the best economic news this region has

had for 20 years. This will provide a massive boost for economic regeneration in Yorkshire."

Merseyside also welcomed the news it is likely to qualify for Objective 1. Merseyside Training and Enterprise Council chief Linda Bloomfield said it was "wonderful news".

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Bribery overseas will be offence in Britain

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

BRITISH businessmen will face fines or imprisonment for using bribes to win big contracts abroad under new laws contained in an anti-sleaze Bill to be unveiled in the autumn by Jack Straw.

The Home Secretary will seek to clean up sleaze in Westminster and town halls across Britain with a package of measures in the wake of the "cash for questions" scandal involving Tory MPs in the last parliament. It will become an offence to bribe MPs.

The Independent has learned that it will also become an offence for British citizens to engage in bribery abroad. The international anti-corruption laws will be targeted at big overseas arms contracts involving British companies, and civilian projects such as dams and airports. In future, it will make it a criminal offence for a UK resident or company to bribe public officials in another country.

Clare Short, the Secretary of State for International Development, pushed for the measure with the backing of Margaret

Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade. Britain signed a Treaty in December in Paris by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which is to be ratified by the end of the year on outlawing international bribery and corruption.

Mr Straw is taking the lead in bringing the OECD declaration into UK law through the Home Office legislation. He told a joint select committee on parliamentary privilege in January that the Government would root out dishonesty in public life and increase trust in those who held public office.

He said that the Government saw a review of the corruption laws as they applied to MPs as being an integral part of the domestic and international fight against corruption. A new single offence of corruption covering both the public and private sectors is expected to be introduced. Mr Straw is also studying the Nolan committee recommendation that anti-corruption legislation should be extended to cover behaviour that amounted to misuse of public office.

The pressure for government action against international corruption was

stepped up by a ministerial aide, Hugh Bayley, MP for York, who introduced his own backbench Bill last month to promote the case for new laws against international bribery and corruption.

He was opposed by the Tory MP for Lichfield, Michael Fabricant, who warned that if bribery was made illegal for British companies, "it would probably rule many British companies out of applying for contracts abroad which would simply fall into the hands of French, German, Japanese, American and other competitors".

Mr Bayley said bribery was legal as long as the act of bribery took place offshore, and in some instances it was still a tax-deductible activity.

He said: "When bribery takes root, people start buying things that they do not need. Last year, the chief of naval staff in Pakistan resigned amid allegations of bribery in connection with a £580m purchase of submarines." Mr Bayley estimated that the global sums paid in bribery by some of the poorest countries in the world totalled £50bn, roughly the same as the sum needed to eradicate world poverty.



Lending support: The American model Brenda Schadt, star of the new Wonderbra advertisement, launching the poster campaign in Kennington, south London, yesterday. Photograph: David Rose

Drug offenders to be dealt with at special court

By Esther Leach

MAGISTRATES are soon to begin training for an experimental court dedicated to dealing with drug offenders.

They will spend two days looking in depth and discussing with experts the impact of hard drugs on society and the lives of people who take them and deal in them.

The JPs, all very experienced, will sit at Wakefield and Pontefract magistrates' courts in West Yorkshire, where they will decide if offenders go on rehabilitation programmes or are sentenced in another way.

Constance Gilbey, 68, chairwoman of Wakefield magistrates, who is one of a pool of 24 volunteer JPs, said the court should not be seen as an easy option for offenders.

"Those who go on the treatment programme will follow a very strict regime which will restrict their freedom," said Miss Gilbey. "The idea is to help offenders to break the drugs habit and give them new lives - what's useful to the offender will be useful to society."

Miss Gilbey, a JP for 38 years, said magistrates will have

to be convinced that the offenders who come to their court are committed to the treatment programme before they are allowed on to it.

The court, which begins work in June, is part of "Step" - substance misuse and enforcement programme - initiated by Wakefield Health Authority, drugs agencies in the area and the UK anti-drugs co-ordinator, Keith Hellawell, when he was chief constable of West Yorkshire, after they saw a similar scheme operating in Miami.

Police will refer offenders arrested for drug-related crimes to a Step worker who will assess them in the cells before they are bailed or remanded to the next available drugs court, which will be held weekly in Wakefield and eventually Pontefract.

Their treatment taken while on probation will involve detoxification, using drug substitutes, and therapy to change attitudes and behaviour. Regular urine tests will be made to check that no drugs are being taken.

An offender will go back to court regularly so magistrates can monitor their progress. If they do well they will graduate and the probation order terminated or left to expire.

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Cook wins friends in Syria and Lebanon

By Robert Fisk

A BELLOW of thunder heralded the approach of Robin Cook, Middle East peace-maker extraordinaire, hero of Har Homa and political descendant of Lord Arthur James Balfour. In the Lebanese foreign ministry, a hush fell as the Briton who lost his dinner invitation with Benjamin Netanyahu took his diminutive place before the microphones alongside the very tall Lebanese foreign minister, Faris Boutz.

Having stood up to the might of the Israeli settlers, Mr Cook had just come from the halls of power in Syria where the Lion of Damascus - President Hafiz al-Assad - congratulated him on the stand taken by the European Union in the Middle East. They had discussed Israel's offer (or threat, depending on your view) to stage a unilateral withdrawal from its occupation zone in southern Lebanon.

Mr Cook and his crocodile of dark-suited FO experts, of course, understand all too well how the Syrians feel. If Israel withdraws from southern Lebanon but stays in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, it might be able to persuade the world that it wants peace while keeping Golan - and without a war in southern Lebanon, the Syrians would not be able to encourage the Hizbollah to kill more Israeli soldiers and thus put further pressure on Israel to leave Golan. But that was not what Mr Cook said.

So what did Mr Assad tell

Blair to risk wrath

Tony Blair may visit some of the disputed territories in Israel next month in spite of the anger caused on Tuesday by the visit by Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, writes Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent.

The Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, accused Mr Cook of breaching an agreement about not meeting any Palestinian official when he visited the Israeli settlement of Har Homa, known to Palestinians as Jebel Abu Ghneim.

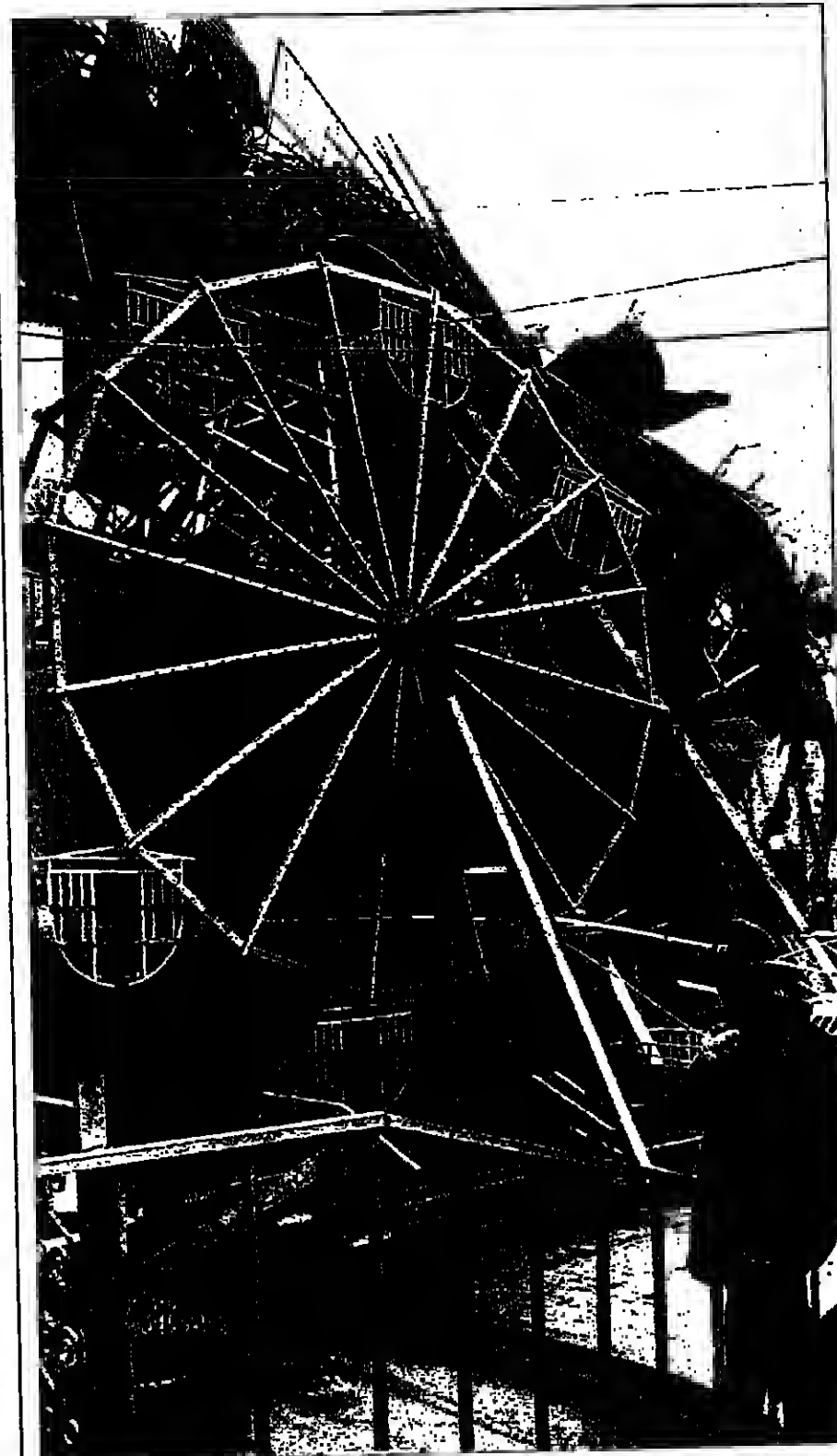
The Prime Minister's spokesman said Mr Blair would not be visiting the same settlement as Mr Cook. Mr Blair will be visiting Israel around 21 April.

Mr Cook? Our Foreign Secretary told *The Independent*:

"I think it is fair to say that they [the Syrians] do not themselves see a realistic prospect of a unilateral Israeli withdrawal. Were such a unilateral withdrawal to take place, that is a matter for the Israeli government. I think that if there were to be any discussion about the terms of that withdrawal, they [the Syrians] would, of course, expect the Syrian track to be part of that discussion, and we all want to see progress on that same track."

It was not difficult to see how the Middle East must tremble when Mr Cook speaks. Lord Balfour would have been proud.

A giant of the war falls before the wrath of God



Blown away: Resisting all bombs, the big wheel of Beirut was a symbol of survival in Lebanon's civil war. But it couldn't stand up to this week's typhoon. Photograph: AP

FIRST, they ripped down the bombed-out American embassy. Then last year, the wreckage of the US Marine base - 241 US servicemen died in the 1983 suicide bombing - was bulldozed away. But on Monday God took a hand and tore down one of the Lebanese civil war's most enduring monuments: the great yellow, red and green ferris wheel that had turned merrily for the past 20 years. Bombs had exploded 20 yards away. Shells had crashed into the funfair behind. But it was a tempest of even more explosive proportions that brought the whole thing twisting and buckling to the ground this week.

I'd been on the big wheel myself with a score of Lebanese families. I'd even helped make a Channel 4 television series in which our cameraman, Steve Foster, filmed Beirut from one of the bucket chairs that now lies crumpled at the bottom of my street. But I wasn't surprised at its fate. Not in living memory had a typhoon of this proportion struck the city, a monstrous wind quite unlike the *hamsin* storm that normally dumps Egypt's grey sand over Lebanon at the start of spring. I flew back to Beirut on an Air France Airbus as the first tempest subsided, a great camel ride of a flight that landed in Beirut with a coating of yellow sand on the plane's wings.

For the sand falling across Beirut is from a *sahra* wind, from Libya, along with so much rain that our sunsets have come dark red through the cyclone. At my home on the Corniche, the deluge has been flying horizontally off the sea, smashing into my apartment block to be blasted upwards by the wind. I found our family cat Walter - named after the news editor of the *International Herald Tribune* - sitting in astonishment on the balcony as rain streamed from the ground towards the top of the house. Maybe this was what it felt like to go down on the *Titanic* (of which more later).

BEIRUT DIARY



Robert Fisk

ON Tuesday, I drove down the rain-lashed coast to the south Lebanese town of Tibnin where the Irish battalion of the United Nations peace force was celebrating Saint Patrick's Day. Colonel Colin Doyle - Lord Carrington's ADC in Yugoslavia - inspected his men alongside the UN's new Fijian force commander, a massive figure - and a massive improvement on his Polish predecessor who filled almost every page of the UN's magazine, *Politburo*, style, with pictures of himself. The soldiers wore sprigs of shamrock, forced to receive their latest UN medals under a tent whose roof vibrated with the downpour. The UN's equally massive Turkish spokesman, Timur Goksel, had to shout to make himself heard, difficult since the confident, loquacious - and brilliant - Goksel speaks English so well but at such speed that he sometimes verges on the incomprehensible.

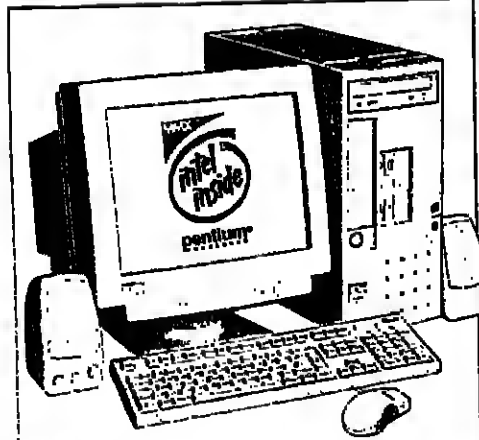
But what sounded over Tibnin on Tuesday were the claps of thunder that detonated down the airwaves to Ireland as RTE, the Irish state broadcasting service, interviewed its UN soldiers live down the line to Dublin. Presenters shouted through the storm as great blue and grey clouds trembling with lightning drifted down the wadis around Tibnin. And there at one point was Fisk, waffling on to Irish listeners about the inconsistencies of Lebanon's con-

stitution - in Mayo, no doubt, they speak of little else - while being drowned out by God's anger overhead.

For a people inured to tragedy, you might wonder why the Lebanese have been turning out in legions to see *Titanic*. But they have, packing six cinemas (a Beirut record) at 55,000 spectators a week (another record). Does the liner's fate appeal to them as the elements close in on Beirut? Are they attracted by the name of the ship, which in Arabic means "Let's have sex"? Or could it be that we westerners simply do not know what the Beirutis know: that 13 Lebanese, praying vainly for God's mercy in steerage, were down with the *Titanic*, the names unrecorded because they boarded as wait-listed passengers at Cherbourg. For the most part, they were poor Christians from the Bekaa valley - and because their names went unlisted and, no doubt, because they were of "Middle East appearance" - no one in the great world cared about their fate except the families left behind in Lebanon.

I was the same case with the five Sidon fishermen who vanished into the storm on Monday. Their names were buried in the weather reports in the papers, consigned to the waves which crashed over the coast road and sprayed across the wreckage of the Beirut ferris wheel. But on Tuesday, their two little boats appeared at the entrance to Sidon port. They had lost sight of shore, roped themselves together in the typhoon and fought off the sea for 12 hours while praying - *Titanic* style - for God's mercy. Astonished police and harbour workers watched the two battered hulks creep into calm waters. And so it was that Basam Habi, Hassan Chaabane, Rifaa al-Aadil, Farj Halime and Khaled Awja came home.

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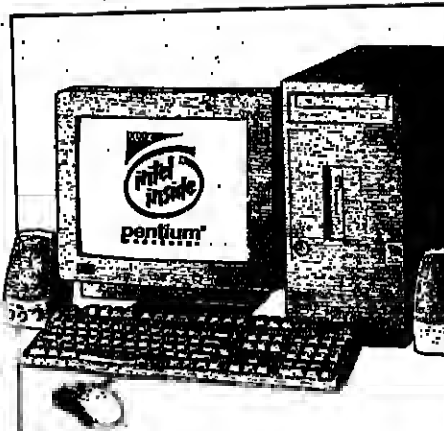
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Clinton's
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صحنه من الراحل

Clinton's aides fall into their own trap

By Mar Dejevalky
in Washington

IF THE White House had hoped playing dirty would deflect the squeamish Washington press corps from the chase after presidential sex scandals, it had another think coming yesterday. The heirs of Watergate hero: Ed Woodward and Carl Bernstein seemed only riled by White House attempts to discredit Kathleen Willey, the woman who claims President Bill Clinton groped her when she went to ask for a job. They vowed to continue their hunt.

There was particular irritation over the copies of letters and telephone logs released by the White House on Monday, less than 24 hours after Ms Willey's television appearance. The 24 handwritten letters, gushingly enthusiastic about Mr Clinton's presidency, were released in an apparent attempt to show what happened in the Oval Office on 29 November 1993, it had not diminished Ms Willey's devotion to the President. Therefore, the reasoning apparently ran, nothing had happened - or if it did, Ms Willey was happy about it.

If it had been so easy to find and produce these records, reporters asked, what about letters and logs of telephone calls from Monica Lewinsky to the President? Washington reporters have enquired daily about such records ever since allegations two months ago that Mr Clinton had had an affair with the former White House trainee and induced her to lie about it.

Early on in the Lewinsky saga, the *New York Times* reported that White House visitors' logs showed the former trainee had visited the White House 37 times since she stopped working there in 1996. Some visits had taken place outside normal working hours. Since that leaked information was published, it has never been denied by the White House but neither have records been produced. The chorus from reporters now is: why not?

A series of damaging-limiting television appearances by the White House communica-

tions director and Clinton ally Ann Lewis have also come in for criticism. She told several television shows she had personally met Ms Willey when she inquired about helping Mr Clinton's 1996 re-election campaign. Again, the inference was that Ms Willey could not have been so distressed by her 1993 encounter if she wanted to sign up again for the President's campaign. But Ms Lewis's defence has rebounded. Among her qualifications for her White House job, along with her support for Mr Clinton, were her feminist credentials. She had been vocal in her backing for the law professor, Anita Hill, in her epic struggle to prevent Clarence Thomas becoming a Supreme Court judge in 1991 because of alleged sexual harassment. Now, her defence of Ms Hill - in particular her explanation of why Ms Hill took a decade to speak out against Mr Thomas - is being cited against her.

"You have this really prestigious and powerful boss," Ms Lewis told an interviewer seven years ago, "and think you have to stay on the right side of him or for the rest of your working life he could mix another job." Spot the difference between that situation and the situation of Kathleen Willey, challenged the *New York Times* columnist, Maureen Dowd.

The challenge of the White House press corps has appeared to take officials unprepared. The normally unflappable White House spokesman, Mike McCurry, has seemed ill at ease since the weekend, and the usual team of "spinners" has shunned the cameras. Yesterday, the *Washington Times*, which takes a mostly anti-Clinton line, reported that the decision to produce Ms Willey's letters had been made personally by Mr Clinton, who was now "directing" the attack.

More problematical for Ms Willey was a report that she still needed money and had tried through her lawyer to obtain a \$300,000 book contract for an autobiography around the time she made her sworn testimony alleging the incident with Mr Clinton.



Taking liberties: President Clinton's White House scandals, as caricatured for a float in the recent Rose Monday carnival parade in Cologne, Germany
Photograph: Reuters

Stockmarket figures just don't add up for Beardstown Ladies

A CHERISHED fantasy of America's share-owning democracy - that amateur investors can be as savvy as the professionals - has just come crashing down with an apology from the good ladies of Beardstown, Illinois, that they made a mistake, writes Mary Dejevalky.

The Beardstown Ladies, average age 70, gained a reputation over the years for a commonsensical, mid-Western approach to small investment that claimed returns competitive with, and often superior to, those of the big stockbrokers.

The 14 members of the Beardstown Business and Professional Women's Investment Club devised a recipe for "stock-picking" that, according to their calculations, yielded a 10-year return on investments of more than 23 per cent. That compared with a 12 per cent increase in the Dow Jones Industrial Average over the same period.

The professionals checked the figures. Alas for the ladies, their claim did not add up. The professionals found that the real return over the relevant period, the 10 years in 1993, was 9.3 per cent.

Now, Betty Sinnock, the club's treasurer, has issued an apology: "The Ladies were very concerned that the public would think we had purposely misrepresented results in any of our books," she said in a statement. "We shared this original rate of return in good faith and are terribly sorry for the error and the confusion it may have caused."

Perhaps the Ladies should not be too distraught. Their 23 per cent yield did happen, in 1991-92, and according to a professional audit by Price Waterhouse, their rate of return for the 14 years of their club's existence has been 15.3 per cent: respectably in line with mutual fund yields over the same period.

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German left set for dramatic right-turn

By Imre Karacs
in Bonn

THE ABRUPT pensioning off of Johannes Rau, the grand old man of the German left, prepares the way to a dramatic right-turn by the Social Democrats, little short of the Blairite revolution in Britain.

Mr Rau was prised out of his throne in North Rhine-Westphalia, the most populous Land in Germany with more than a little help from Gerhard Schröder, the SPD's chancellor candidate. After 19 years as regional prime minister, reigning over 17 million people, he is to be succeeded by Wolfgang Clement, a close Schröder ally.

At first glance, the swap is a brilliant marketing ploy. Mr Rau quits at the age of 67, in the year when 67-year-old Helmut Kohl is going for his fifth term as Chancellor. With a growing majority of Germans exasperated by Mr Kohl's political longevity, letting an age of retirement for politicians can only help the opposition's cause.

The Social Democrats will now follow into battle a relatively inexperienced Mr Schröder, aged 51, flanked by Mr Clement, a mere 58. On the German scene, where advancement is strictly in accordance with the "dead man's shoes" principle, the tandem counts for a generational change.

The new packaging, which has already sent the SPD's poll ratings to dizzy heights, conceals substance that the Schröder campaign has so far lacked. The chancellor candidate is a practitioner of right-wing economics, the delight of business but the dismay of his own party. Mr Clement is on the same

wavelength as Mr Schröder, but has until now been unable to enter debate about the kind of policies that a new Social Democrat government should pursue. Disagreements between Mr Schröder and the rest of the party have paralysed efforts to forge a programme.

The unveiling of the manifesto scheduled for earlier this week had to be postponed because the party presidium could not agree on details of their "most market-oriented" programme to date. It made all the right noises about investment and the need to modernise, but fell short of the specifics business hoped to see.

The next attempt will come at the SPD's national conference next month. Unlike previous occasions of its kind, Mr Schröder will no longer stand on the rostrum completely alone. The regional party that is now under Mr Clement's thumb accounts for one-third of conference delegates.

Besides trying to impose their will on their own party, the two men are also challenging assumptions about the SPD's future coalition partners. Mr Clement inherits a fractious Red-Green government in North Rhine-Westphalia, beset by acrimonious rows over the environment.

The Greens are aware their cause will find even less sympathy with the new prime minister, just as the environmentalists in Bonn can expect few favours from a future Chancellor Schröder. The latter has already served notice that unless the Green leadership can whip their fundamentalist troops into line, they can forget a place in the new government.



Freak snow: Tourists outside the Old City in Jerusalem battling against a snowstorm yesterday which closed schools and roads. Photograph: AFP

Hacker held

An 18-year-old Israeli computer hacker known only as "The Analyser" and wanted by the FBI, has been arrested. Israeli police said the hacker is accused of "infiltrating computers in Israel and the United States".

— AP, Jerusalem

Dope trial

THE first criminal trial of doping practices in sport opened in Berlin yesterday, with the defendants claiming to be the victims of a political vendetta. Four swimming coaches and two doctors of the former East German club Dynamo Berlin are charged with causing grievous bodily harm to 19 girls by feeding them anabolic steroids in the 1970s and 1980s.

— Imre Karacs, Bonn

Gaullist expelled

THE former secretary-general of the Gaullist RPR, Jean-François Mancel, was expelled yesterday for refusing to shun the extreme right wing National Front. Mr Mancel has indicated that he is ready to forge an alliance with the NF following Sunday's regional elections to block the governing leftist coalition from taking power in his area.

— Reuters, Paris

Albanians accuse Serb police of opening fire on protesters

THE MAIN Albanian political party in Kosovo accused Serb police of opening fire on a peaceful demonstration in the city of Pec yesterday, killing one person and wounding at least five more, writes Andrew Gumbel.

The incident, which could not immediately be confirmed, appeared to signal an escalation in

tension in the province coinciding with new efforts by international negotiators to persuade Serbs and Albanians to sit down and hammer out an agreement on Kosovo's status.

The violence in Pec, in western Kosovo, near the Albanian border, was reported by the Kosovo Information Center,

the mouthpiece for the main Albanian party, the LDK. The Serbian Information Ministry issued a statement denouncing vandalism by Albanian demonstrators in five towns in Kosovo, but made no mention of police retaliation.

For the past nine days, Albanians have been able to

protest peacefully against Serbian rule with little or no resistance from the security forces.

Resentment has been growing, however, with gangs of Serbs standing on street corners during demonstrations, apparently itching for a fight. Serb nationalists vowed that they would never give the province up even

though they are outnumbered nine-to-one by Albanians.

Diplomatically, the situation appears to have hit a dangerous impasse, with the Serbs still refusing to withdraw their forces from the cluster of villages they attacked two weeks ago, killing more than 80 people, and the Albanians refusing

to talk to a Serbian government delegation.

The US special envoy Robert Gelbard was in Pristina yesterday, as was a delegation from the Italian religious community of Sant'Egidio, which negotiated the framework of an agreement on education between the two sides in 1996.

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THEATRE TOKENS

Incense, icons and faith

More and more westerners are turning to the timeless certainties of the eastern Orthodox church. As the Royal Academy celebrates its art, Steve Crawshaw explains its attraction



AT THE Russian Orthodox cathedral in South Kensington, there is the same thick smell of incense that you can inhale in every Russian church from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The singing, with its full, throbbing bass line, is equally Russian - rousing and melancholy by turn. In an Orthodox church, the only musical instrument is the human voice, which fills the echoing space. The service is not for the faint-hearted: it is much longer and more leisurely than its ramby-pamby western equivalent, lasting an average of three hours at a stretch. Except for the very old or infirm, worshippers stand throughout the service, as the music and the incense swirl around them. There are no pews, and worshippers move around - lighting candles, listening to the music, kissing icons or lost in prayer. In short, a very Russian event.

And yet, many of the Kensington congregation (and of the Russian-singing choir) are not. Even some of the priests are British. Bernadette Sharpe, a nurse, found the music "much more spiritual" than anything she had heard before. Freke de Graaf, an acupuncturist, was attracted by the "joy" of the church. "It's really alive. It's not just a Sunday church. And the tradition of the theology is rooted very deep," he says.

While the Catholic and Anglican churches constantly seek to reinvent themselves, reforming the content and language of services, the Orthodox church - in effect, a group of churches - finds its strength in standing still.

It would seem to be the very antithesis of modernity, priding itself on its refusal to follow the fashions of the rest of the world. In some respects, that is precisely what has ensured the Orthodox church's strength today - not just in the countries where it is rooted, but also in Britain at the end of the 20th century. No modern fads: just the church, the music, and God.

The art is part of that deliberate lack

of modernity. At the Royal Academy in London, an exhibition opens today which pays homage to the simplicity and complexity of Russia's religious art. In the West, the link between religion and art has been almost severed. We expect to see a Madonna and Child in an art gallery, not in a church. At an Orthodox service, by contrast, small icons are dotted around the church, and the large central iconostasis forms a focal point.

The art has a severe beauty which stands in stark contrast to the lushness of Western art. None the less, the austerity is never removed from earthly reality. In Andrei Tarkovsky's classic film *Andrei Rublev*, about the greatest icon-painter of all, the two themes are powerfully merged: the painful realities of the artist's life give way in the final minutes to the hitherto unseen glories of Rublev's art itself.

For many, the Orthodox church is the end of a long spiritual search. Father Michael Fortounatto, one of the Russian priests in London, describes a not untypical phone call last week from a woman who was keen to be admitted to the Orthodox Church. "She grew up an Anglican. She's been through India, and meditation. Now, she has decided to come to us." As the 20th century gives way to the 21st, the number of converts is growing.

Deacon Joseph Skinner, himself a former Catholic, talks of the importance of ceremony. "In the Orthodox church, there is a sense that people are standing before the presence of God. Even in a church as ancient as the Catholic Church, something very precious has been lost. It has become introverted, on man and his world." He insists, however, that this is "not world-denying - it's profoundly world-affirming. We have the best of both worlds - our feet on the ground and our head in the heavens."

Peter Francis, former presenter of the BBC's religious current affairs programme, *Everyman*, is another convert. He has re-



cently published an account of his voyage from agnosticism through hesitant belief to the certainties of the Orthodox church. He talks admiringly of the "combination of matter-of-factness about the certainties and a high seriousness of purpose". The composer John Tavener - who gained a new dose of international fame when his *Song for Athene* was performed at the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, last year - is one of the best-known Orthodox followers in this country. He

sees the Western tradition as deeply flawed: "I'm not very at home with humanism." He emphasises the idea of "not-knowing" instead of rationalism, and argues: "We don't know. We cannot judge. Only God can really judge what's going on inside a person's soul."

Until recently, the Russian congregation at the cathedral in Emmbury Gardens consisted only of a few émigrés. Now the number of Russians at Orthodox services in this country has increased with

diplomats from the Russian embassy - official representatives of the Soviet Communist government just a few years ago - coming to have their children baptised, and to receive baptism. Even now, however, Britons make up as much as a third of the congregation. English-language leaflets at the cathedral encourage visitors.

Elsewhere, the importance of the church as an exclusive bearer of national identity (foreigners not welcome) is strong. The Serb Orthodox Church has

Prayers at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral, Kensington (far left)
Photograph: Rul Xavier
Main picture: Virgin and Child Hodegetria, 14th Century, from the State Trotyakov Gallery, Moscow (Royal Academy)

often been remarkably close to the nationalism of the Serb leader, Vojislav Milosevic. In Russia, the identity of church and state has been equally strong during the Second World War, when it led to a ban on the Church to mobilise it on behalf of the Soviet motherland.

During the Soviet era, the Church worked hard to achieve a kind of accommodation with the state. Church leaders avoided public criticism of the authorities. In return, they (though not the congregations) were allowed a relatively comfortable life, though constantly under the steady eye of the KGB. The strange cohabitation led to a split in the church, with a separate émigré Russian Church in London - a split which persists seven years after the collapse of Communism.

In Russia today, the Church's more important than ever. The powerful mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov, has made the rebuilding of the Church of the Saviour in central Moscow (destroyed by Stalin in 1931) one of the most high-profile and ambitious items on his agenda for the New Moscow. The rebuilding of the church is seen by many Russians as proof of Russia's intrinsic greatness.

The art which goes on display at the Royal Academy this week represents the spiritual, national side of the Orthodox church - the side that has attracted so many supporters in this country, as they seek to break away from the perceived wilderness of much Western religion. Tavener explains the spiritual qualities of Orthodox worship and art alike: "When I see a Russian painting of the Mother and Child that I see is a fat Italian baby, wonderfully generated. Such a picture conveys no theology - which an icon will always manage to do because it is not striving to be realistic."

With this "back-to-basics" quality, it sees itself as the church from which the Catholics broke away, just as the Protestants later broke away from Rome. In other words, no dogmas here. As Peter Francis notes in his *Journey*: "The Orthodox church could never be accused of being trendy." In some respects, that is true. None the less, events fashions come and go, the confident tranquillity that the Church offers is more widespread than for many years. The Church's history changes, just as the art has changed only imperceptibly over the years. It does not need to go to the people; the people come to it.

The Art of Holy Russia at the Royal Academy from 19 March to 14 June, 10am to 6pm daily, with extended opening to 8.30pm on Friday.
Peter Francis: Journey: A Spiritual Odyssey (Chatto & Windus, £12.99)

DILEMMAS

Keep quiet about the neighbour from hell - let the buyer beware



VIRGINIA IRONSIDE

THERE was a card game I always used to like playing called Old Maid. You took out all the Queens except the Queen of Spades, dealt the cards and, top side up and fanned out, you offered your hand to the person on your left who had to take one. The aim was to get rid of the Queen of Spades. It was extremely entertaining to see how people presented it - some nonchalantly hidden behind another card, some double-bluffing and sticking it out obviously, some tucking it behind. As soon as you got a double you could get rid of two of your cards but someone was always left with the one Queen - and became Old Maid.

Clara's problem reminds me of this game. Except unlike the players of the card game she's tempted to draw attention to the Queen of Spades, not the point at all.

Why should she say anything? If this couple are so broke or cheese-paring to do their own conveyancing, they have to live with the consequences. They will learn, as we

Clara and her husband have wanted to move from their flat since they moved in. The freeholder throws water over them if they go into their garden, they can't get an extension built because she blocks it due to a badly-written lease. Now a lovely pregnant couple want to buy, doing their own conveyancing. Should Clara warn them?

all learn, the hard way; that in cases like these it is usually better to leave such things to the professionals. How does she know, anyway, that, rather than her landlady/freeholder being the neighbour from hell, they themselves aren't the neighbours from hell, and that far from being the delightful flat-owners they think they are they may be driving the poor woman mad with their peculiar behav-

iour. Maybe the woman would behave completely differently if there were a young baby on the scene. Unlikely, I know, but quite possible.

We have all had to learn lessons in our youth and very few people help us out. We've all bought scent from a tout in Oxford Street and found it was just water; we've all bought soap and dusters at the door from people selling for religious

organisations and found the soap turns to a kind of gritty stone and the dusters fray at the hems. I once even bought a dead tortoise from a market pet-shop that they persuaded me was just "asleep". We've all had to learn the hard lesson that when something's cheap we ought to be on our guard.

I was in a similar position recently when I had to sell a car which had an intermittent fault. It used to cut out suddenly - whether going at 20mph or 60mph on a motorway. It was most unnerving and it was only because I knew the car well that I prevented several accidents. No garages could find the fault, even though they borrowed it for weeks. Only one garage even admitted it existed. Eventually I took it to a dealer. At the back of my mind I kept thinking of the parent who might buy the car for her son, who'd only just passed his test, and kill himself on the M4. I was in a cleft stick. Finally I told the dealer the

problem and made him promise on his mother's grave that he would warn potential buyers of the problem or make sure his garage sorted the problem out. He promised. I have no doubt he never kept his promise and never meant to. I took the money and felt dreadful.

Clara and her husband could say to the couple that the landlady had been known to be a little difficult sometimes. That might save their guilty consciences. But apart from that, they should remember the old Latin phrase *Caveat Emptor* - Let the buyer beware.

WHAT READERS SAY

When selling anything that is shoddy, inferior or second-rate your only hope is that a "mug punter" will show an interest. A flat with a restrictive lease and a loony neighbour in tow could only be sold to a mug. Unless your prospective buyer asks pertinent and direct questions about the lease, the neighbour or planning restrictions I would not raise these matters at all. If they do ask these frankly obvious questions then more fool them.

Mr Maynard Chilly,
Liverpool

Grit your teeth, bite the bullet, put a pillow in your mouth to muffle the screams of your raging conscience and exchange contracts. Did the previous owner warn you about your psychotic neighbour? Would you have moved in if they had? Thought not.
Jamie Same,
Batham

NEXT WEEK'S DILEMMA

Dear Virginia, This is a very tricky problem but it concerns me. I can't give you my name as you will understand.

When I was about 14 my brother came into my room occasionally and after a while we had sex. I was too young to enjoy it very much but I didn't mind it, and when he got a girlfriend after about a year he stopped. I look back on my childhood and find it filled with things that peo-

ple would now call abuse. A flasher at eight. A groping uncle who'd tickle me in parts I didn't like being tickled.

And yet I don't seem to have suffered at all. I have a wonderful marriage, a happy sex-life, and three wonderful children. I'm not worried. Do you think all this will suddenly catch up with me?

-Aron

Letters are welcome, and every one who has a suggestion quoted will be sent a bouquet from *Independence*.

Send comments and suggestions to Virginia Ironside at the Features Department, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL (fax 0171-293 2182), by Tuesday morning. If you have a dilemma of your own, please let me know.

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صلى الله عليه وسلم

The man who built the future

Creating the fantastic capital city Brasilia was the highlight of Oscar Niemeyer's career, but his work did not stop there, as he tells Nonie Niesewand

IN HIS shabby, Sixties-style, top-floor flat in Rio, architect Oscar Niemeyer is musing on his long life after being told he has won the Royal Institute for British Architecture's gold medal for architecture. "I've spent my entire life at the drawing board just thinking about architecture," says the 91-year-old. Now he's "very, very happy".

Niemeyer was in a very different frame of mind when I interviewed him just in December. Then, he said mournfully: "There's nothing to celebrate. It's terrible being old." Not so terrible when you have just won one of the most prestigious awards in the world. As the medal citation puts it: "At the opening of the century, Oscar Niemeyer expressed the challenge of the new horizon, and his work was suffused in optimism and hope. At the opening of the next millennium, modern architecture is perhaps set to regain something of that optimism."

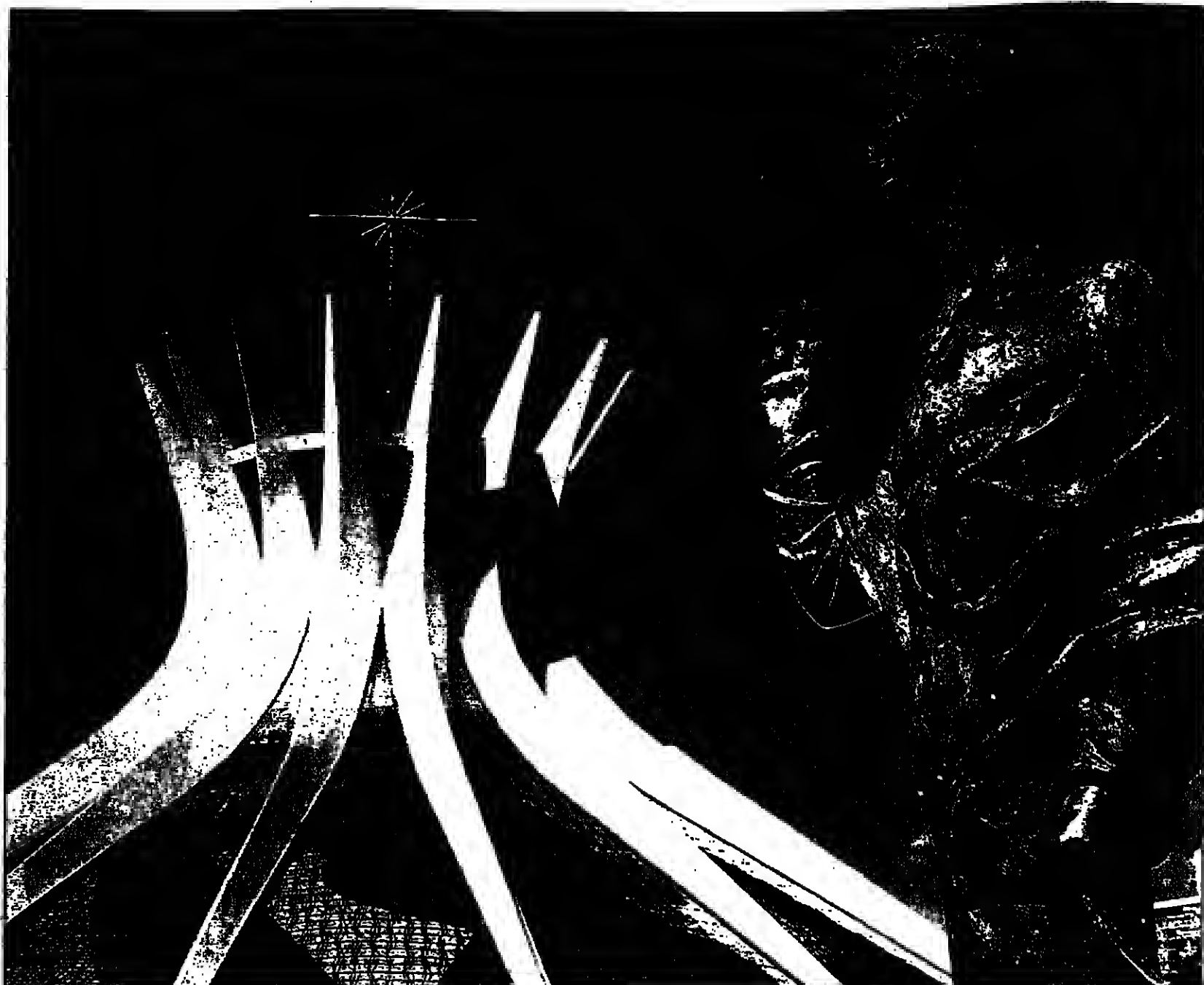
In Brasilia, the capital city he carved out of the savannah in the Fifties, Niemeyer has long been lauded. There was samba in the streets in his honour and a carnival to celebrate a decade as a World Monument site, along with the 300-year-old Great Wall of China.

Longevity has not blocked Niemeyer's creativity. On a clear day in Rio, he can point out his latest project across the bay, the museum of modern art in Niteroi, which landed on a rocky promontory like a flying saucer last year. The outer rim is a walkway, the segmented core for sculpture and partitions for paintings. It cannot have been easy for the curator, but the people love it.

Armed with a magic marker, Niemeyer sketches for me the seminal buildings of his



Niemeyer, above, designed his cathedral in Brasilia, above right, in order to 'avoid the old dim cathedrals that remind you of sin'



Photographs: Camera Press/RHPL

60-year-old career. Some of them, such as the Oxford college he blueprinted or the desert city in Israel, both designed in the Seventies, never got off the drawing board.

First, he sketches Pampulha town, which he began in 1940, just three years after setting up his practice in Rio. He had already decided that modern architecture did not express itself well in concrete. "Monogamous, rationalist, repetitive," he says dismissively. On this, his first project, he used cement to bring a sense of structural lightness to his building. "Reinforced concrete freed creative expression. We pushed it to its sculptural limits to make architecture that was more expressive."

Creating Brasilia - the city where he gave expressive form to function - was the commission of the century from President

Juscelino Kubitschek, who ran up a debt with the World Bank to build a showcase in the desolate landscape. A competition for the town plan was won by Lucio Costa (Sir William Halford of RIBA was one of the judges). He drew it in the shape of a fish skeleton: airports and cemeteries in the tail, an arterial road for the backbone, diagonal fish bones leading to the residential areas that feed the head and, like a glassy eye, a white marble square flanked by Congress, the Legislative Assembly and ministries.

"In 1952 Brasilia was a desert, hostile, no road, nothing. It was the end of the world," says Niemeyer. At the Palacio Planalto, the seat of government, he set slender columns wide apart and imagined himself walking between them as a way to reach the desired form. "I wasn't concerned with structural

rigour," he says. Sometimes, he anchored seemingly fragile buildings in water. Diplomats walk over the water, set about with Amazonian lilies by genius gardener Roberto Burle Marx. They go to the theatre in a pyramid studded with an overall bump bas-relief which casts interesting shadows. The executive council works in a building shaped like an executive toy, with cats' cradle tensile wires rigged to a square frame, and the flat roof of the legislative assembly is topped with two huge cement bowls.

No matter how monumental, the buildings appear to hover above the red earth on these stiletto-shaped columns. Niemeyer says: "When someone goes to Brasilia, I warn them, like it or not, you won't be able to say you've seen something like it before."

The cathedral is a tepee, whaleboned in

white cement and filled with turquoise, indigo and aquamarine glass clouds and doves. "I avoided the old dim cathedrals that remind you of sin and made the access a narrow darkened gallery, so that when you step into the stained-glass nave, you open up to infinity," he says. Yet Niemeyer insists he has no faith. Politics is more important to him. A life-long communist, he wants a society without class barriers.

Ironically, four years after creating this powerful seat for a left-wing government, a military junta took over, remaining for 20 years. Niemeyer flitted in and out of South America for years, working in France and Algeria and for Italian publishers Montadori, where he varied the columns in size like a musical score. "I showed them what could be done in rein-

forced concrete," he reminisces on stretching the span from 50 metres to 55 metres and thinning it down at the Algerian University to the horror of a French official. "That's why Brasilia was a positive thing for the Brazilian people. It gave the world the idea that we could do many things."

On his return, he made more monuments but this time with a political message. First there was the Kubitschek catfalkque in Brasilia, in memory of his life-long friend. Then the Monument Volta Dedonda north of Rio, in honour of the workers during that time. In Sao Paulo, a monument of a gigantic hand with blood running from it was designed by Niemeyer to give Latin America a new sense of cultural identity. No need to ask him what he sees as a monument to himself. He's got Brasilia.

Take nine architects...

Youth and ambition are at the heart of project to rebuild part of west London

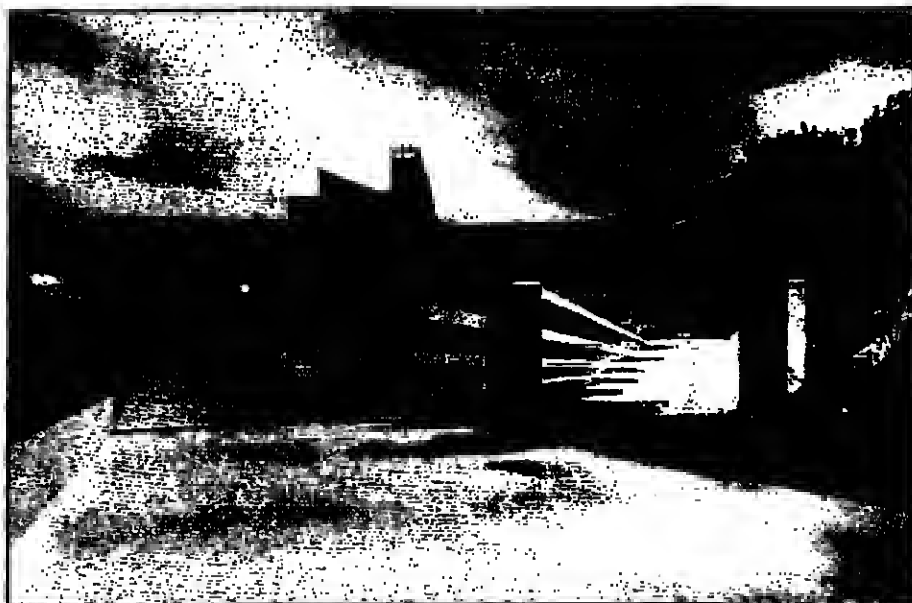
IN A rubble-filled strip of sand that passes for a London riverside beach, small boys use sticks to push anything that floats into the Thames. That includes a dead cat and a lot of plastic bottles, writes Nonie Niesewand. To get on to the beach, they made a giddy assault on the high stone walls built to prevent people from straying near the water, let alone even glimpsing it. Just walking at the water's edge means a detour because the waterfront is blocked by a wharf.

The roar of the traffic under nearby Hammersmith flyover booms like the sea, so you might as well go under Hammersmith flyover for all the pleasure of this riverside walk. Except that women are frightened of the subways.

The site is just one of nine blots on the west London landscape which Hammersmith and Fulham council wants to be rid of by throwing money and architects at them. The first task, however, is in canvass local opinion, and the Architecture Foundation has been brought in.

The organisation, launched seven years ago to promote discussion and understanding of the built environment, first became involved in Hammersmith by hosting a roadshow. Environment minister Nick Raynsford went along, as did the former Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer and architect Lord Richard Rogers, a launch member of the Foundation and now its chairman.

But once all the photo-calls are over, the person responsible for making this sort of event succeed is Lucy Musgrave. She has the tough job of touring the council estates to get recalcitrant residents to turn out and tell the experts what they like or dislike. Wormwood Scrubs was the worst, she says with people shouting at her to leave. She'd have to like to know what they think the Scrubs, after all,



The organisation headed by Musgrave (below) is promoting radical new work

is not just a prison, but a neighbouring open space which is the most underused in the borough. At the Riverside Studios last Saturday the response was much much better. Fifty-eight local people turned up to write



Everyone wants the bridge to stay closed, better access to the river, more litter collection

down what they wanted. More reeds, ducks, playground equipment, lights in the subway. Tranquil corners and quiet places. A mini eco-farm. Safer stairs down to the beach by Hammersmith Bridge, which

On hand to hear their problems was a council co-ordinator and the young architect designated to the project, Robert Barnes, an artist working in light, and a landscape designer. They will address all of these is-

everyone wants in stay closed. Improved access to the river. More litter collection. Less Chris Evans and *ITV Friday*, which brings a huge audience and their cars around the Riverside studios each week. In a series of schemes to revitalise the riverside walk between Hammersmith Bridge and Queen Caroline Street. When all nine schemes are in, the Council will determine how much money to allocate each. They are committed to spending some in each area but the better the local response, the more money goes their way.

Lucy Musgrave is trying to take architecture off its pedestal and get a dialogue going with the people who must live with it. When she began at the Architecture Foundation, she booked Westminster Hall for an open forum on London. It was enormously successful. Now this could be a blueprint for the nation. At the end of May a one-day symposium will be held to review the results of the previous two months and politicians, architects and planners will assess what has been achieved. *The Architecture Foundation's latest exhibition is New Architects - Britain's best young architectural practices, from 24 March at 30 Bury Street, London SW1.*

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Blair-Brown split that never was

TONY'S in a jealous rage – says conventional wisdom. Gordon is in the driving seat; he is the real Prime Minister. The wall that separates Numbers 10 and 11 Downing Street is plastered with suspicion and peppered with rivalry. So say the pundits, and what else – after the general enthusiasm at Gordon Brown's Budget on Tuesday – do right-wing commentators have to go on? It's the birth of Brownism, they cry, though Tony stayed his hand over Individual Savings Accounts and Tony is the real friend of the middle class.

It is certainly true that the two derive from different political traditions and that their instincts incline them to different audiences. Where Blair really does have a feel for Middle England, and is at home with the Home Counties, Brown is a Scottish Labour man. The Chancellor is steeped in Labour culture, so that it has coloured his mind and emotions: the Prime Minister has hardly been dunked in it for longer than the average teabag.

But no two politicians are identical. These two, at least, spent years engaged in a strikingly intimate political conversation about modernisation: and it is the fruit of that conversation, not their earlier political education, that drives Blair and Brown's New Labour. Brown's Budget was an instalment on the social market project fashioned jointly with Blair in Opposition.

To reports of petty remarks by one man about the other (or, more likely, by their staffs) the response has to be this: rivalry between Chancellor and Prime Minister is virtually built into our constitution. Number 11 has been filled several times before now by men who had been pipped for the leadership and still harboured ambitions. Think of Jim Callaghan. If Gordon Brown is now convening policy seminars in his front room, is that so very different from Callaghan's picking of Nuffield College's finest brains in the mid-Sixties or Lord Lawson's think-tank in the late Eighties? Farther back still, Hugh Dalton did not relinquish his membership of the Fabian Society on becoming Chancellor, nor his ambition to succeed Clement Attlee. It would indeed be abnormal, and probably unwelcome too, were Gordon Brown not to have his eye on the main chance.

The interesting question is whether he and Tony Blair do differ either in philosophy, approach or tactics. And here the evidence is compelling. They not only share the same big picture, but complement each other skilfully day to day. If we ought to label Gordon Brown's antecedents more obviously "socialist", there is nowadays nothing identifiably more left-wing about his beliefs. Together they accept the limits to government action to "manage" an internationalised economy; they believe that labour-market reform is the key area for policy; both see how, notwithstanding the historical allegiance British business has shown to the Conservatives, it can be Labour's working partner.

It's handy to present Mr Brown as a dour Presbyterian who believes everyone holds their salvation in their own hands and that, in the modern, secular world, emancipation comes through earned income, meaning a job. He does think this. But every part of that code is shared by the almost-Catholic Prime Minister, especially the belief that collective action (government) retains a key role even in an individualised world. Its job is to help people on their way towards realisation of their personal and family ambitions. For neither man is the death of class rhetoric a painful loss.

It long ago dawned on Tony Blair that Labour could never win a general election without a specific and consistent effort to reach out to "Middle England", to those conventionally if narrowly defined as readers of the *Daily Mail*. These people had to be wooed, flattered and above all reassured; their repugnance at Tony failure would not be enough by itself. This project Tony Blair has made his own. Having won the election, the need to keep this constituency on side has not diminished: it explains much of Mr Blair's body language and rhetorical flourishes and perhaps goes some way to exculpate him from the sin of sharing a far too narrow bed with Rupert Murdoch. The phrase is "giving cover". Tony Blair gives his Cabinet colleagues more political space than they would enjoy by themselves – not covertly to engage in acts of socialism but to get on with the task of capitalist management the Government has set itself. This is exactly what Gordon Brown has enjoyed, thanks to the Prime Minister. Whether the Blair analysis about Middle England is correct is debatable, especially in the light of recent poll evidence: in favour of genuinely redistributionist tax policies. As a tactic however it makes a lot of sense. It may even suit this government's purposes to read a stream of stories about Blair-Brown splits – the good cop, bad cop routine gives them both room for manoeuvre. Which is the best reason why we should be suspicious of such stories. These two men may not love each other but as a political team they have lately been formidable.

Pray or pay at Abbey

WESTMINSTER Abbey is to charge visitors an admission fee of £5, but waive the fee for those who want to use the church for prayer. This raises the question of how the beaudeant at the West Door will perform the act of triage – distinguishing mere tourists from those with religious intent. And they must not let themselves be caught out by those art types to whom gazing on Baroque sculpture or contemplating a soaring chancel equates to a spiritual experience.

Perhaps anyone in a leisure shirt or trainers gets shut out. But this runs against the Church of England's more relaxed and family-friendly ethos, which means that on a suburban Sunday worshippers are often more casually dressed than people in the street. Alternatively the door-keepers might look for signs of sanctity, an earnest desire for intercession or perhaps a protruding halo. Then again, everyone entering the hallowed portal might be forced to pay up and a refund be offered to those observed in prayerful attitude for a stipulated period of time. Perhaps the Dean could devise some sort of holy barometer and set it up in the Abbey rafters.

Alternatively Westminster Abbey, a national treasure, could be nationalised and, given a proper budget for repairs and maintenance, and could, in the spirit of the British Museum and National Gallery, charge no entrance fee at all.



Fishermen hauling their nets in the Aegean sea off the Greek island of Lesbos

Photograph: Mylee Nicolaou

A 9x12 print of this photograph can be ordered on 0171-293 2534

PICTURE OF THE DAY

Safety of acupuncture

AS ONE who was present at the meeting on acupuncture that you reported on 17 March ("Doctors warn of injuries from acupuncture"), I can testify that the session on safety was the least satisfactory of the conference.

We had no context in which to judge the average of 10 adverse events reported annually from around the world. Did this make acupuncture safer than drug treatment? Most likely, according to Professor Ernst. How many incidents related to the UK, and how old were they? This wasn't known. Were doctors implicated in causing injury, as well as non-medical practitioners? Yes, as a matter of record. Could we be sure that the complications reported stemmed from the acupuncture treatment? Not always. The evidence was too anecdotal to be of much help to anybody.

More concrete were the indications of acupuncture's effectiveness in the treatment of pain, nausea and vomiting, and possibly stroke rehabilitation and other conditions. It was a pity your reporting presented a picture which could only put patients off. Also presented to us were the horrifying hospitalisation statistics as a result of conventional medical treatment. Since when has it been demanded of "cult therapies", as you describe one of the oldest of medical professions, that they alone must be free from all adverse effects?

In fact it was clear from Dr Rampe's presentation that the issues were ones of training, for medical and non-medical alike, rather than danger from acupuncture as such. Your readers will want to know that these issues are being addressed, both by the British Medical Acupuncture Society and by this Board in conjunction with the British Acupuncture Council, who have had schemes of accreditation up and running for some time. There is no complacency, but there is a need for the sake of the patients to get the matter in perspective.

Earl BALDWIN OF BEWLEY
Chair, British Acupuncture Accreditation Board
Oxford

YOU ARE right to regard alternative therapies with scepticism, but it

is not always true that "alternative medicine is fine as long as it does no actual harm" (leading article, 17 March).

Even if an alternative practitioner is highly skilled, there is always a risk that the patient, with or without prompting by the practitioner, will avoid orthodox medicine altogether, which in some cases may be essential to their survival.

Alternative therapies can also cause harm in more subtle ways. They engender suspicion of orthodox medicine with their excessive claims about harmful side-effects and the ingestion of toxins. They introduce back into medicine concepts of magic and superstition from which doctors have freed themselves after centuries of effort. We should not let the placebo rule our health.

Dr SIMON JONES
London SW12

Waiting to die?

SHEILA HAYDEN's letter (16 March) paints a picture of rheumy-eyed elderly people sitting around waiting to die. But it doesn't have to be that way. Those of us who are in a position to help change the future of residential care should take steps now to ensure that care is driven by the needs and wishes of residents, rather than what is convenient for management and staff.

The Abbeyfield Society, a charity which runs more than 60 residential care homes, has conducted research to find out what residents actually want from providers of care and housing. The results make salutary reading. It is clear that, in general, respondents were happy with the quality of services received, but nevertheless there was plenty of evidence to suggest that minority preferences often go unacknowledged. We are now planning to implement appropriate change. Long life can be worth it, but only if care providers give life value by paying careful at-

LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

attention to the physical and mental needs of the individual.
ANGELA WHITCHER
Head of Public Affairs
The Abbeyfield Society
St Albans, Hertfordshire

HOORAY for Sheila Hayden! I am a healthy (I think) 67-year-old and intend to live my life the way I want it – to enjoy all the "sinful" things which make life more enjoyable – chocolate, fry-ups, salt, butter and so on. I hope I shall go out with a bang and not linger on as my mother, 96 this year, is doing, in a home for the elderly. I hope that, if I do live long enough to find myself lingering on, legislation will have been passed that will allow me to end my own life legally.
MARGARET CHILD
Bingley, West Yorkshire

SHEILA HAYDEN is right. It's the quality of life that counts. And unlike many relatives, she is both compassionate and honest. A "sans everything" old age can be torture for relatives – although most are unwilling to admit it. I'm 76 and marginally "sans". I'm looking for a nursing home which allows unlimited access to Greene King draught Abbot, "Veterano" brandy and T-bone steaks. Any offers?
KEN CLARK
Bedford

Radical Sixties

THE IMPORTANCE of the single year 1968 has always been greatly over-rated, compared with the truly significant social and cultural (though not political) transformation of the entire period 1958-1973 ("the long Sixties"). James Maycock's evocation of the Grosvenor Square demonstration of March 1968 ("Flower Powerless", 17 March) performs a useful service in drawing attention to how ambivalent the utterances of leading rock singers were; there never was a unified

"counter culture" lined up in dialectical opposition to "bourgeois society". Maycock might also have mentioned the dogmatic tosh being spouted by Tariq Ali about capitalist crises and the imminence of revolution.

Chaut magnifique, but it wasn't revolution. Meantime the true revolution – in living standards, values, relationships – was affecting everyone.
ARTHUR MARWICK
The States Research Group
The Open University
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire

No racist 'Merchant'

SHAKESPEARE was too wise to base *The Merchant of Venice* on blatant racial prejudice, rampant though it was in Tudor days (report, 14 March; letters, 16, 17 March).

Most of the unctuous and hypocritical Christians in the play come off rather badly and in Act III Shakespeare gives Shylock those lines that are the ultimate put-down of anti-Semitism: "Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food..."

As for Portia's overquoted "quality of mercy" speech, what of the shared of mercy shown to Shylock? The most dramatic utterance of the play must be Shylock's last words: "I pray you give me leave to go from hence/I am not well".
BARRY HAINMAN
Staines, North Yorkshire

Are we welcome?

IT IS good to learn (Letters, 14 March) that your hoped-for readership among the "young, professional, high-income, educated" includes the "young in spirit". Can those whose wealth is other than pecuniary also hope for a look-in?
ANN SHEARER
London NW3
[Yes. Rich in spirit welcome too.
– Andrew Marr]

Off the road

I DID NOT recognise myself in Nicholas Schoon's article "Why 'off-road' vehicles should get off my road and off my planet" (16 March).

I have a 4WD, which is 10 years old. It is a good people-carrier, enjoyed as much by the grandchildren on the school run as more sedate folk on long luggage-laden journeys. It accommodates up to seven people, with easy access for a semi-cripple, and has the most comfortable driving position I have ever found. The view of the road makes for safer driving and passengers can enjoy looking over hedges and fences. As for being a gas-guzzler, our vehicle's fuel consumption compares favourably with most large family cars.

Living as we do in the depths of rural Dorset we are evidently already off Mr Schoon's planet.
JOSEPH M RUTTER
Shaftesbury, Dorset

THE UK has two areas where ORV ownership is concentrated: London, where Range Rovers and the like are only a rather pathetic statement of status, and Shetland, where they are used for their real purpose and form a vital piece of working equipment for shepherds, fishermen and crofters.
STEPHEN HOWARTH
Shetland, Nottinghamshire

Spring in Japan

YOUR PICTURE for 1950 (The Eye, 16 March) shows the Return of Spring Festival of Saichō Temple, held on 3 February each year. The two batons, about a foot long, are thrown into the crowd at midnight. The man who succeeds in finding one in the mêlée attempts to conceal it, runs to a house marked by a white lantern and buries the baton in a container of uncooked rice that is waiting there. This confers good luck on the house and those that dwell there. The batons are returned to the temple and the finders of the batons are rewarded.

The photographer is presumably Tamotsu Yato, who illustrated a book on the so-called naked festivals of Japan.
ALAN FORGAN
Guildford, Surrey

A true Budget for

All your Budget questions answered – no matter how selfish or narrow-minded



MILES KINGSTON

JUST HOW will the Budget affect me? That is the question asked by people after every Budget, and a damned selfish, narrow-minded, ungenerous question it is too, but that is neither here nor there, because today we have a panel of experts in this column to answer that very question, in other words: Just how will the Budget affect me? And our questions come from right across the social spectrum... Dear Panel of Experts, I wonder if you can help me? I am a typical Tory ex-minister who once had a secure job under the last government, helping to sell arms to the Middle East and roading up to the Saudi Arabian government. However, my fortunes took a tumble when I withdrew a libel action against *The Guardian*, and recently I have been reduced to fending off possible arrest for perjury. My income has obviously taken a bit of a tumble in all this hoo-ha. What I want to know is this: if

things get any worse, and I get into bad debt problems, is there anything in the latest Budget which would help me? Not really. Dear Panel of Experts, I wonder if you can help me? I am a middle-aged woman who would like to follow Gordon Brown's advice and get back to work. At present I am the companion to the Prince of Wales, who will be the next King of England, and this of course is pretty hard work in its own way as anyone who has been constant companion to the future King will testify, though only Mrs Wallis Simpson comes to mind as an example, which is perhaps not a cheering thought, but what I want to know is this: is there any succour in the recent Budget for those of us who have given up our lives to caring for and looking after middle-aged men who, through no fault of their own, are still not able to

take over the job for which they have been trained since youth? Not really. Dear Panel of Experts, I am the controller of a large radio network which recently decided to have a major facelift. In order to gauge the opinions of the listeners to our network, I travelled the length and breadth of Britain consulting with, talking to and even – when I had time – listening to what our listeners had to say. This of course involved an immense amount of travel, for which the money had to be found by shaving the budgets of other programmes, and I did all the travelling in an unmarked company car, no different from other cars except for a suggestion box clamped to the back. I cannot make out from the latest Budget whether I can claim for all this travel as a tax concession or a company allowance, and whether I have to submit the

names and addresses of everyone I consulted, whereas it would be much easier to just put down: "Middle England". Can you advise me on this? Not really. Dear Panel of Experts, I am a Newcastle United director who makes a living out of taking the punters for a ride. After the recent Budget, can I claim that ride as a legitimate travel expense? Not really. Dear Panel of Experts, We are five girls who have recently made a fortune out of travelling the world as a group, making films and best-selling records, etc. However, this will not last for ever and one day we shall probably have to do some proper work, as it looks silly to go into retirement in your mid-twenties. The trouble is that we have received no training to do any proper work, and the only thing we can

do really well is stand in a line, and locate the nearest microphone. Is there anything in the latest Budget which will help us retrain for real life and get back to the work which Mr Gordon Brown so much wants everyone to embrace? Not really. Dear Panel of Experts, Now that PEPs and TESSAs seem to be on the way out, I am told it is a good time to invest in new schemes such as ARFURS, PIP EMMA and LAMONTS. But what are these? An ARFUR is an Automatic Ring-Fenced Unit Resource. A PIP EMMA is a Private Insurance Policy Endowment Medium Managed Amount. A LAMONT is a Large Amount of Money Offloaded by the National Treasury. Dear Panel of Experts, Yes, but have you any idea what they all actually are? None at all. See you next Budget Day!

Is being Foreign Secretary still the best job in the Cabinet?



RUPERT CORNWELL
ON ROBIN COOK
AT HAR HOMA

AH, the chauffeured limousines and government aircraft, and the round of international conferences. And what can match the exhilarating sense of escape from narrow domestic politics to the great stage beyond, helping Britain "punch above its weight" in world affairs? No wonder the Foreign Office is reckoned the best job in the Cabinet, short of being Prime Minister. But do not be deceived. Day in and day out, it is also the most punishing job in government, barring perhaps that of Prime Minister. The schedule is crammed, the paperwork is monstrous, and the travelling constant. And all the while, a Foreign Secretary becomes aware that his work is mostly conveyor belt stuff. He will leave no monument behind, no testament to those exhausting years of service.

Except for moments like Tuesday, and what will surely be the picture for the news of 1998: Robin Cook, in the middle of a three-day, six-country swing through the Middle East, is seen to his dignity by his fingernails as the rain lashed down on the heights of Har Homa, the heekers heckled, and hard-faced Israeli security men twice his size helped him to the safety of his car. And to cap everything, cancellation of dinner with Benjamin Netanyahu (though whether Mr Netanyahu is a man you'd want as a dinner companion must be debatable - the things one has to do for Britain).

For all of this Mr Cook is being roasted. He is said to have single-handedly destroyed Europe's chances of mediating in the Middle East. He stands accused of that capital offence for a diplomat of "offending all sides at once". The words "fiasco" and "diplomatic disaster" are much banded about. Once more we are reminded of Mr Cook's clumsy foray into the Kashmir dispute which half-wrecked the Queen's visit to the India and Pakistan last year. Then there was the brusque dismissal of his wife of 28 years, and the bizarre and demeaning trashing of his former diary secretary during a press conference in Brussels. And, last but not least, the contrast between words and deeds in the conduct of New Labour's "ethical foreign policy", in Asia above all.

This time moreover, the Americans are huffing and puffing. State Department spokesmen murmur how Mr Cook's performance has "not helped" what is still referred to in polite circles as the "Middle East peace process". So much for Britain and the EU as honest brokers. The day after Har Homa, his speech to the Anglo-Arab Association on 5 March has an almost comical ring. "Europe has an important part in the Middle East peace process... Tonight I start an intensive European effort to stimulate progress... We can give the process a helpful nudge." Some stimulation, some progress, some nudge. Clearly, it will be concluded, the man is a serial

blunderer, too convinced of his own intelligence to learn from his mistakes.

In fact, Tuesday's collision has been on the diplomatic railway tracks for weeks - certainly since Mr Cook's speech in London a fortnight ago setting out a new and expanded role for Europe in the search for peace in the Middle East. Last weekend, as Mr Netanyahu warned darkly of Europe not understanding the Middle East, his EU colleagues endorsed his idea and Mr Cook insisted he would go to Har Homa. As we all know, he did.

But the Foreign Secretary and the influential pro-Arab lobby in the Foreign Office, the so-called "Camel Corps", are the lesser villains of the piece. Ultimately, blame for the mess lies with the Israelis: not so much the bigots who dub "Anti-Semite" on the walls of the British Consulate, but a right-wing government that insists on its right to build settlements as and when it pleases, and its spokesmen who liken Mr Cook's greeting of a Palestinian official in East Jerusalem to a foreign dignitary on a visit to Britain, travelling specially to Belfast to shake the hand of Gerry Adams. Except that the most powerful foreign dignitary of all, President Bill Clinton, did precisely that in November 1995.

No, the plain truth is that as long as Mr Netanyahu remains prime minister of Israel and pursues his current policies, neither Britain nor the European Union - regarded as incorrigibly pro-Palestinian - nor even the United States, have a hope of brokering a deal acceptable to both sides. Indeed, the Netanyahu snub may be taken as warning to the US of what might happen, should Washington press too hard on the settlements. If

Benjamin Netanyahu as dinner companion - the things one must do

Mr Cook's "diplomatic disaster" has illuminated to the world just how inflexible Israel is, then so much the better.

The most serious consequence of the affair could be its impact on Mr Cook's political relationship with the Prime Minister. Next month Tony Blair visits Israel. Like Mr Cook he will be wearing a European as well as a British hat. Inevitably he will face the repercussions of this week's fiasco. The word from Downing Street yesterday - and it could not be otherwise - was that the visit would be going ahead, and that Prime Minister backed his Foreign Secretary "totally". In fact, after its lonely support of American threats to use force against Israel's great foe Saddam Hussein, Britain is in a stronger diplomatic position than might first appear.

But let us for a moment suppose differently. Suppose Mr Blair, who in foreign affairs seems happiest when dispensing inoffensive and feel-good platitudes, has been thrown out of his stride by the unseemly episodes of the last 24 hours. Suppose too, as happened with Margaret Thatcher and Francis Pym and later on Geoffrey Howe, the Prime Minister starts to lose confidence in his Foreign Secretary. That is the moment at which the most punishing job in the Cabinet starts to become impossible. We have not reached that point yet. Despite much informed whispering to the contrary, Mr Cook swears he loves his job. But sometimes you sense his heart may not truly lie amid the splendours of King Charles Street. This week's scenes in Jerusalem might hasten the moment of his leaving them.

In love with the telephonic darling who monitors and screens my messages

John Walsh's sensitive verbal disposition has taken several hits this week, from BT operators to new American slang



Just who is that woman British Telecom has answering my phone?

Photograph: Getty Images

MY BRITISH Telecom lady has lost the plot. The super-calm voice on my phone, the one that monitors my messages and screens me from the outside world, has completely mislaid the storyline.

You know the person I mean? Maybe she turns up on your telephone too, the faithless hussy. I've considered her a close personal friend since I agreed to have the system installed, some months ago. I was entranced the first time I rang home and heard those primary-schoolmistress tones say, pristinely: "Good evening. This is a Bee Tee answering service. There's no one here to take your call - but I can take a message for you..." Her voice was so emphatic, her enunciation so clear, she sounded like Shula in *The Archers* addressing a shed of Albanian peasants.

It used to work like this. If callers had left messages, the phone would ring, or the dialling tone would beep, to let you know. Then you rang 1571 to get your calls, and heard this tightly-buttoned BT mix (I imagined a Chanel suit, a Kirsty Young hairstyle, a whiff of *Tresor*) offering you a range of exciting transcommunication possibilities. "Four messages. Hear them?" she'd ask in imperious tones. "Message timed at 6.45pm today. Hear that message? Repeat that message? Save that message?"

You were expected to answer all her enquiries by saying "Yes" or "No" down the line, and woe betide you if you mumbled. She would come on the line, say, "Sorry, I didn't understand that" and make you repeat what you'd said, cooing sweetly the while, rephrasing her instructions with increasing simplicity ("Would you like to save or remove that message?") in case you might be drunk or foreign. She taught you to mind your dictionary Ps and Qs, to be decisive and forthright, to sit up straight and stop fidgeting.

Then she went off me, grew cold and irritable, had attacks of PMT. Instead of the phone ringing to say there were messages waiting, a moody silence prevailed. The dialling

tone snored away unconcerned. If you rang 1571, you'd get half of one message, aborted at random. Things went downhill fast. The voice I'd come to love hardened in tone, from Shula Archer in *Ann Widdecombe*. If she asked, "Remove that message?" it now sounded like an order. If you replied "No", she'd remove it anyway. Whatever you wanted, she'd do the opposite. You'd think we'd had a flaming war about housework or something.

Theo she affected to be deaf. Whatever you said, there'd be an eerie silence and she'd reply, sulkily, "I didn't understand that". Even if you enunciated your words like John Gielgud, she'd say, snotily, "I didn't understand that. Would you like to hear this message?" Yes, you'd snarl, yes, yes, yes, Goddammit. "Sorry, I didn't UNDERSTAND that," she snarled back, suddenly standing revealed as Alex Forrest, the madwoman in *Fatal Attraction*. "DO YOU WISH TO HEAR THIS MESSAGE OR NOT?" Ten minutes later, her voice was breaking up and I was shouting abuse at a recording.

It couldn't go on. I had to get a BT man to take her away to the Answering Machine Funny Farm and have her attitude problem seen to. Uncomfortable thoughts of *The Stepford Wives* assailed me day and night, especially the scene

when the robotised Paula Prentiss gets knifed in the circuit boards and goes bananas. My telephonic darling is now back on the phone line, working perfectly, cooing helpfully and recording my messages as if nothing had happened. But what flash of humanity was revealed when her circuits crashed? And how can I stop this feeling of guilt that I've had her turned into a robot again?

AFTER inarticulate grunts, professional slang is perhaps the biggest irritant to the soul. After years spent wincing every time I heard voices on the radio discussing "Peps" and "Tessas", I learn we now have to discuss the pros and cons of things called "ISAs", which have replaced them. ("Doctor, I'm a bit worried about me icers..."). Being asked about "cashback" at the Safeway checkout, as if it were a form of words that fell naturally to your lips, is enough to turn you into Paul Johnson. Carpet fitters who decide they can't nail down the Axminster round the edge of the room, say "I think we'll 'ave to PVS it". Give me strength. But some his of oewly minted slang are oddly appealing. Like the moment in a West End Seattle Coffee emporium during the week, when the woman beside me ordered a large espresso to take away. Without looking up, the (American) girl behind the

counter yelled over her shoulder, "Doughle E to flee..."

CONVERSATION of the Week was surely that between Kathleen Willey, the former White House worker, and Ed Bradley, the interviewer on CBS television's *60 Minutes*, about yet another of President Clinton's alleged peccadillos.

It wasn't just for what Ms Willey said, though God knows that was interesting enough, but for what she didn't say. Let me remind you: "He had his arms tight round me. He kissed me on my mouth and pulled me closer to him... He touched my breasts with his hands and I was just startled." Indeed you were, madam. So far, so good. Then Bradley asks, "Where, er, exactly, did he, ah...?" and Ms Willey replies that the wandering Presidential hand had seized her hand and clamped it on his (by oow surely rather battered after all these interns and researchers) groin. "Was he aroused?" inquired Bradley. "Uh-ha," replied Ms Willey.

And that was the end of the conversation. No really, that's actually how it finished, with Ms Willey's pitiless interviewer presumably quite satisfied with her reply. We in Britain, however, are not. Did she, for Chrissake, mean Yes

or No? (She wouldn't have lasted five minutes with the lady from the BT answering service.) Are we to be denied the truth of whether the principled Prez clutched another Willey to his own, all because of that curious American fondness for non-verbal interchanges?

You know the kind of thing. If you say "thanks" to a New York waitress, she'll murmur "Mm-hm?" abstractedly on a rising lilt. Ask a garagehand in Denver if he can check your oil and he'll say, "Uh-hnnh" (meaning "I would love to be of assistance, but sadly I have an appointment with my advanced cello teacher"). Say anything dissembling to a small American child and it'll protest with that awful whinging noise, "Ne-hahh".

It's not a pretty record of inarticulacy, with the language of explanation, gratitude and protest all reduced to primal grunts. But it's all recognisably of a piece with President Clinton, and his apparently Tourette-like manhandling of anyone in possession of a uterus - I mean *anyone*. White House job applicant, beauty queen, night-club singer, friend's wife, stenographer, colour co-ordinator, office cleaner, tea lady - who has ever strayed into his Fondle Zone.

A true Budget for women would be much more radical



DIANE COYLE
THE VALUE OF UNPAID WORK

HAVE Gordon Brown and his all-male team of advisers at the Treasury come up trumps with his Budget for women? Not really, despite the increase in child benefit and the new work and childcare credits for the low paid.

The Budget did mark, as Harriet Harman emphasised in a speech last night, the end of the assumption that families consist of a male breadwinner and a female helpmate in the home. The welfare state has been built on this tradition of unpaid female labour, whereas the new measures recognise that very many women are in paid work and need help with childcare.

There was other good news in the Chancellor's speech too. Apart from the large financial gains for children, we females of the species must breathe a sigh of relief that two potential catastrophes, which would have cost women billions of pounds, have been averted, at least for now. After a huge amount of lobbying and ear-bending, the Chancellor accepted that the new Working Families Tax Credit must guard against switching money within households from men to women.

Yet the fact that both these financial disasters looked at one stage as though they might happen demonstrates how important it is to keep the Boy's Own Treasury on its guard. The lads simply do not have the gender impact of their proposals at the forefront of their minds. Take the narrow escape

from a men-to-women redistribution in the new Working Families Tax Credit, the replacement for Family Credit. The initial plans would have involved a "push to wallet" transfer of up to £40 a week. Family Credit is paid direct to mothers whether they are the main earner or not. The new tax credit will go through the pay packet as a tax refund, and could have ended up going to men in many of the cases where it is claimed by couples rather than lone parents. When it is introduced, couples will be able to nominate which of them should receive the money; but campaigners are still concerned about whether the practical details will make this a genuine choice in practice.

The other big threat to purses is one that might loom again in a future Budget. That is a return to joint taxation. Although Mr Brown says he does not plan to abandon the independent taxation of husbands and wives, a reform introduced by Nigel Lawson, the question will inevitably arise when he gets around to taxing child benefit - an intention he signalled yesterday.

On the face of it, it is entirely unobjectionable to guarantee that child benefit will remain universal but tax it for high earners. And when you accept that, it seems to make sense to take into account the joint family income for tax purposes - after all, both incomes go to support the children, so why should non-

earning wives of rich men get a higher level of child benefit than the low-earning wife of a middle-income man?

The trouble with this reasonable view, which the Chancellor certainly holds, is that defending the principle of independent taxation is absolutely crucial to women. Any retreat from it will introduce a big tax rise - for women. At the extreme, a reversion to joint taxation would be equivalent to a 6 pence increase in the basic rate of income tax for working women.

The Boy's Own Treasury simply does not have the gender impact of its proposals at the front of its mind

The explanation is simple. If income tax is assessed on both incomes, the second earner starts to pay income tax on her first pound - and at the higher rate if her husband is in the 40 per cent tax band. If she is taxed separately, she gets her own personal allowance so the first slice of income is tax free.

And quite apart from the money, there are other problems. What would the position of cohabiting couples be? The Inland Revenue knows if you are married. It does not know whether you live with someone - or, if you do, whether they are the father of your children or

just a good friend. Do we really want the tax inspectors to know the answer to these questions? You only have to look at the troubled history of the Child Support Agency to realise how disastrous it can be when officials start to probe into the details of people's personal lives.

These points raise broader questions about Mr Brown's intentions towards women. Does he care about the distribution of income within families as well as between them? And does he value unpaid work in the home

as much as paid work outside it? The answer to both appears to be no, whereas for women it needs to be yes. The first yes is why independent taxation matters, and the second explains why it is important for benefits to be paid to the woman of the house rather than the man.

A true Budget for women would accept that there has to be some unfairness between households in order for there to be fairness within them. The Chancellor has to forget about taxing wives for having well-off husbands.

Any genuine reform of the tax and benefits system would

acknowledge the value of unpaid domestic work. Although, as Ms Harman acknowledged, the traditional family of male earner and female housekeeper is a thing of the past, that unpaid work still needs to be done and be valued. After all, domestic effort amounts to at least half of total measured national income on the most cautious official estimate and more likely matches the money economy in size. Women do twice as much of this unpaid work as men - an average of nearly 300 minutes a day versus men's 150 minutes. But although we must wholeheartedly welcome the extra money he found to give to mothers and carers, by incentives to work Mr Brown means incentives for paid work.

My proposal for a Budget for Women would be higher taxes on rich men to pay for a far bigger increase in resources for childcare both in and out of the home. While generous child benefit is a lot tamer than the old feminist demand of wages for housework, it is better than peanuts for housework.

A rise to the top rate of income tax would have the perfect gender profile. Sadly, some redistributive measures have been struck off the agenda, even for a Labour Chancellor who has turned out, against the odds, to be willing to take money from the rich and give it to the poor. Taking it from men to give to women is obviously a bit too radical.

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Beatrice Wood

BEATRICE WOOD, one of the world's oldest working artists, has died at the age of 105. In all aspects of her life Wood was equally capable of shocking by either her outrageous remarks, her life style, or her choice of lovers and friends.

A recent photograph of her at work on the potter's wheel captures her in typical pose, adorned in a turquoise blue, loosely fitting sari, a huge silver necklace, large earrings and nearly applied lipstick. Few potters wear such exotic costume for such an earthy task. The title of her 1985 autobiography, *I Shock Myself*, suggests non-conformity in her life and art, an approach borne out by her remark that she owed her longevity to "chocolates and young men".

Born in San Francisco and brought up in New York, she alarmed her wealthy parents by her early concern with art and an offbeat life. Aged 18 she escaped to Paris to study at the Académie Julian and later to perform at the Comédie Française, making friends with many avant-garde artists. Back in New York she maintained contact with European artists including Francis Picabia and Man Ray, with American new wave artists such as Charles Sheeler, and the film star Myrna Loy.

Her closest companion was Marcel Duchamp, and, along with him and the diplomat and

writer Henri-Pierre Roché, she founded and wrote for *Blind Man*, a journal which supported the Dada movement in New York. Encouraged by Duchamp, who was reputed to be her lover - a fact she neither verified or disputed - Wood took up drawing. Often known as the "mama of dada", she was also thought to be part of a *ménage à trois* with Duchamp and Roché, later inspiring François Truffaut's 1961 film *Jules et Jim*.

In response to family pressure Wood married her first husband, a theatre manager from Montreal, in 1919, but the marriage was declared void when it was discovered that he already had a wife living in Belgium. Her second marriage, in 1938, to Steve Hogg, an engineer, was one of convenience in that it allowed them to apply for Red Cross funding when the house they had bought together in North Hollywood was washed away in a flood. Although they lived together until his death in 1960, Wood claimed the marriage was unconsummated, saying that she had loved seven men she didn't marry, and married two men she didn't love.

It was not until the late 1920s that Wood took up ceramics, spurred on by falling to find a teapot to match some neo-rocco lustre-glazed plates. Following a course at Hollywood High School she began to research into lustre glaze techniques, a highly skilled process which was to remain a major characteristic of her ceramics.



Wood: the 'mama of dada', she described herself as a 'terrible craftsman'

Photograph: Garth Clark Gallery

In fact, she did not make teapots at this time, but freely modelled figurines which sold well and helped her survive the Depression. Her deepest involvement with ceramics came in the early 1940s when she studied with Glen Lukens and the Austrian ceramists Gertrude and Otto Natzler. Working from a small studio in Ojai, California, she had an idiosyncratic approach to form and materials, often shocking

the generally conservative world of ceramics by her sense of experiment and innovation. She was never impressed by notions of perfectionism, arguing that "knowing what one's about to take out of a kiln is as exciting as being married to a boring and predictable man", and she freely admitted to being a "terrible craftsman". Her chalcids, bowls and vases, some with stylised figurative drawings, were not intended to be used, but to be beautiful in their own right. But it is this sense of individual vision of her

vessel-based forms and sculptural ceramics which is her greatest strength and fascination. Some, such as the ceramic sculptor Peter Voulkos, responded positively, seeing her ceramics as valid, unique and radical. Anais Nin described Wood as "a modern ceramist creating objects today which would enhance your life". There was also a quieter, less flamboyant aspect to Wood's character. A vegetarian who neither smoked nor drank, in 1913 she became a member of the Theosophist movement, and in

1948 she moved to Ojai to be near the charismatic Indian sage Krishnamurti. Public recognition, though late in her life, was fulsome, culminating in a show at the American Craft Museum in New York in the 1990s. In 1994 Pete Wilson, Governor of California, declared Beatrice Wood a "California Living Treasure".

Emmanuel Cooper

Beatrice Wood, potter, born San Francisco 3 March 1893; married secondly 1939 Steve Hogg (died 1960); died Ojai, California 12 March 1998.

James Smeall

JAMES SMEALL was Principal of Saint Luke's College of Education, Exeter, from 1945 to 1972. Led by his shrewdness and panache, the college grew tenfold in numbers, and rose to national and then international renown as a nursery of teachers and rugby players. He was also a prominent figure in the civic life of Exeter and its co-opted Mayor in 1965-66.

Son of a Yorkshire doctor, Smeall went from Highgate School to Queens' College, Cambridge, where a First in English still left him time to appear as wing three-quarter for the university. After "finishing" at the Sorbonne, he went into school-teaching, and in 1939, at the age of 32, was appointed headmaster of Chesterfield Grammar School. By 1945, however, he was looking for a new challenge.

Saint Luke's was the diocesan teacher training college in Exeter. Though small, it did not lack distinction. But in 1942 it had been bombed into total closure, and in 1945 many of its buildings were still rubble.

For rebuilding and recreating the college, Smeall adopted a time-honoured English ploy, seeking academic repute through manly sports, especially rugby. His scouts went round the schools to recruit good players. He himself refereed and coached. Success



Smeall: showmanship

bred success, until in 1953-54 the first XV scored a record 1,000 points in a season. Altogether in his time the college produced 36 rugby internationals.

In other ways too it was a time of growth. New staff were appointed: Smeall chose well, and then let them get on with it. The students got good jobs, and many rose to headships. The staff were invited all over the world to lecture and advise. Smeall himself lectured more than once in Russia, typically not on education, which bored him, but on 18th-century English poetry and (surprisingly) dockyards.

Saint Luke's in fact was on the crest of a wave, and knew it. A college of education always had one strength denied

to universities, namely a common focus uniting all its members. When student disaffection threatened in the late 1960s, Smeall made a rare declaration of principle: "The college does not belong either to its staff or to its students. It belongs to the children whom the students are being prepared to teach."

But what gave Saint Luke's the edge over its rivals was its style, Smeall's style. Among his staff appointments was the former MP Sir Richard Acland, whose family had given Killerton House to the National Trust. Smeall rented it back from the trust as a hall of residence, with Acland as its Warden. And, when the comedian Jimmy Edwards was playing in Exeter, Smeall invited him to speak to the students, had him elected to the non-existent office of Rector, and proceeded, in the exchange of compliments, to outwit the professional.

For, as befitted the author of *English Satire, Parody and Burlesque* (1952), he was a master of all forms of wit and humour. Alas, only a few of his *moes* are printable. (In notes on the staff left for his successor, he praised one colleague for his "impeccable taste in enemies".) Speaking on an official occasion as Mayor, he likened the new extension of a high-street bank to "an ancient Egyptian urn". Reacting in 1968 to government pressure to admit women, he reported to his governors in revealing words: "I hope we shall be saved from sleazy touchline banishes, wrapped up in scarves and apparently ignorant of make-up." But when they came he welcomed them, for he was kind beneath the satire, just as he was shy behind the showmanship.

He also bowed to the inevitable. When "his" college was incorporated into Exeter University in 1978, he was consoled for the loss of its independence by the growing distinction of its new owners, and delighted by the award of an honorary degree in 1988. To a letter of congratulation he replied typically: "I welcome any recognition that I am still alive."

John Dancy

James Leathley Smeall, teacher, born Middlesbrough, Cleveland 16 June 1907; assistant master, Merchiston 1929-30; staff, Royal Naval College, Dartmouth 1930-34; Housemaster, Bradford College 1934-36; Head of the English Department, Epsom College 1936-39; Headmaster, Chesterfield Grammar School 1939-45; Principal, St Luke's College, Exeter 1945-72; married 1936 Rachel Harris (died 1984; one daughter); died Exeter, Devon 24 February 1998.

David King

DAVID KING was a big ebullient man, an actor who played character parts, making his mark quickly in every role and with a dominating stage presence. He was moreover extremely versatile; one night he could be playing a haggard tramp - with his dog Dougal - in *Z Cars*, and the next a robust country squire in *Trollope*. In 1996 he appeared in a fine scene with Sir John Gielgud in the acclaimed film *Shine*.



Versatile: King, right, with John Gielgud in *Shine*, 1996

Perhaps "Badger" in 13 memorable West End productions of *Toad of Toad Hall* from the mid-Sixties, was his triumph. Badgers became a fascination: his Barnsbury house was filled with pictures, books, ornaments and memorabilia, and on the hall wall was a photograph of himself making up for the part. "Last of all, the eyes / Made larger, wider encircled. / And there, powerful, mysterious, / The complete mask, / Badger." He may have gained a taste

for performing when, as a small boy, he impersonated Carmen Miranda on his parents' kitchen table. Later, as a plump, lonely schoolboy, his toy theatre became all-absorbing. At Cambridge he read English under F.L. Lucas and George Rylands, and Music un-

der Boris Ord, and began acting seriously, playing Othello. His career took off quickly. In the early 1950s came seasons at Stratford-upon-Avon with Peggy Ashcroft, Michael Redgrave and Laurence Olivier, followed by a stint at Bristol Old Vic playing Pozzo in *Waiting For Godot*

and Claudius to Peter O'Toole's Hamlet.

Seasons at the Old Vic in London led to a Russian tour in 1961. King taught himself Russian in advance, and when, in 1987, he and I presented *Agreeable Friends*, an anthology of animal writing, he spoke movingly Esyenin's "To Jim: an actor's dog" to his own dog, Brock, on stage.

Dougal was his first dog, brought in to the Haymarket Theatre one day in the mid-Sixties while King was playing in *The Rivals*, often covering for Ralph Richardson as Sir Anthony Absolute. Dougal and King became inseparable, and he was known as "the actor with the dog". A glossy black charmer, Dougal played alongside his master's pantomime dame, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and on television in *Jackanory*.

Among King's most impressive roles were his immense - in every sense - drag act,

Dame Clara; his virtuoso playing of the Peggy Mount role in *Sailor Beware* (directed as an all-male army show); Sir in *The Dresser*; the Headmaster in *Ferry Years On*; Daddy Warboys in *Annie*; and a favourite, his namesake David King in Christopher Fry's *A Sleep of Prisoners*.

In the early 1980s, he performed in *A Patriot For Me*, which progressed from Chichester to London to Los Angeles, this last an experience he utterly loathed, venting his wrath in poetry and a vitriolic journal. Numerous television appearances ranged from the classics to soap, including the consultant surgeon Mr Bailey in *Emergency Ward 10*.

After Dougal died, Brick was rescued from the Animal Welfare Trust. Less manageable, smeltier, a large, bounding, lovable mongrel, he too was a theatre dog, family, someone to offer devotion at a time when

the profession treated his master less kindly.

David King was a vulnerable, sensitive man beneath his big, outgoing exterior. In recent years he found new directions, and turned out some strong performances in fringe theatre and in frequent broadcasting for the BBC Drama Repertory Company. One of his poems, "I Hate Greens", has become a children's anthology favourite.

When he died he was researching the life of Arthur Conan Doyle to follow his popular portrayals of Henry VIII, Handel, Gladstone and Chesterton at the National Portrait Gallery, and he was about to take part in a recording of *Coriolanus* for Riverrun Productions - a recording now dedicated to his memory.

Anne Harvey

David King, actor and poet, born Rochester, Kent 23 August 1930; died London 3 March 1998.

Red Richards

"A FINE pianist with a marvellous, loose, swinging style." The clarinetist Boh Wilber was in no doubt, when he formed his own band in 1931, that he wanted Red Richards on piano. "He was very doubtful and said that he didn't know anything about Dixieland jazz. I told him that I'd teach him the tunes and that all he had to do was play his own way."

Such reticence was typical of Richards. What fame he had

was thrust upon him, yet he was one of the most continuously busy of jazz musicians, playing and leading many bands and, inconspicuously, touring in 1953 as accompanist to Frank Sinatra.

He began learning to play classical piano when he was 10. When I was about 16 a fellow in my block started taking me to real parties every Saturday night. Sometimes there might be four different parties in the same building that had piano players. That was how I came to meet Fats Waller, James P. Johnson, Don

Lambert and Willie "The Lion" Smith. The parties were always going on, and those guys would play for days without stopping!

It was when he joined the band of the alto saxophonist Tib Smith in January 1945 that Richards began to attract notice. Smith's band was in partnership with the guitarist Trevor Bacon. They played for 10 weeks in Chicago before setting out for California via a tour of the South. Two weeks into the tour

Bacon was killed in a car accident and the rest abandoned the trip. Coincidentally the Savoy Ballroom, New York's legendary "home of happy feet", needed a small band to support the resident Savoy Sultans, and Smith's group was given the job. They stayed for five years.

Richards left for Boston to join Wilber and Sidney Bechet and then came to Europe with Mezz Mezzrow's band in 1953. This was the beginning of a long

series of European visits that continued until his death. The trumpeter Buck Clayton was in Mezzrow's band and his friendship with Richards lasted until Richards played on Clayton's last recording in 1979.

Another long friendship was with the trombonist Vic Dickenson. From 1960 to 1970 the two led a very successful sextet called the Saints and Sinners. In 1975 Dickenson joined the resident band at Eddie Condon's

in New York and Richards became the intermission pianist. From 1979 Richards toured Europe, Asia and Australia with the Harlem Jazz and Blues Band and with the reassembled Savoy Sultans. In 1994 he visited Europe with the trumpeter Doc Cheatham and played and recorded with the Red Richards/George Kelly Sextet.

Richards was a sensitive accompanist and a soloist with a very individual style. He had an

encyclopaedic grasp of the history of jazz piano, and this, coupled to a rolling left hand, enabled him to take his place firmly in the tradition of Fats Waller and James P. Johnson.

He died at the piano in the middle of a job.

Steve Voce

Charles Calverley "Red" Richards, pianist and bandleader, born New York 19 October 1912; died New York 12 March 1998.



Richards: rolling left hand Photograph: Jazz Index

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

RAINBOW: Bennett - on 17 March, at Prince's, Alice Hopkins, Esq., cremation at Merton, Wednesday 25 March at 2pm. No flowers; any donations to cancer research.

Announcements for Glastonbury Births, Marriages & Deaths (Births, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriams) should be sent in writing to the Glastonbury Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 4JL, telephone 020 7 293 2011 or faxed to 020 7 293 2010, and are charged at £4.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Glastonbury announcements must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen, Queen of the Bahamas, will visit the Bahamas from 10 to 14 March. The Queen will be accompanied by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. The Queen will be accompanied by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. The Queen will be accompanied by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Changing of the Guard The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment will take the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

Birthdays

Miss Ursula Andress, actress, 62; Miss Glean Closs, actress, 51; Mr Peter Cotes, theatrical director and producer, 86; Professor Ronald Girdwood, former President, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, 81; The Right Rev Ronald Gordon, former Bishop of Lambeth, 71; Mr Bryan Hildrew, former managing director, Lloyd's Register of Shipping, 78; Vice-Admiral Sir Norman King, former chairman, Bucks Health Authority, 65; Sir David Lumsden, former Principal, Royal Academy of Music, 70; Sir Peter Masefield, aviation authority, 84; Mr Philip Mason, writer, 92; Lord Plant of Highfield, Master, St Catherine's College, Oxford, 83; Lt-Gen Sir Alan Reay, Chief Honorary Steward, Westminster Abbey, 73; Mr Philip Roth, novelist, 65; Mr Bruce Willis, actor, 43; Miss Mary Wimbush, actress, 74; Mr William Winfield, Headmaster, Mill Hill School, 51.

Anniversaries

Births: Georges de la Tour, painter, 1593; Tobias George Smollett, physician and writer, 1721; Dr David Livingstone, explorer and missionary, 1813; Sir Richard Francis Burton, scholar and explorer, 1821; Sergei Pavlovich Diaghilev, founder of the Diaghilev ballet company, 1872. Deaths: Thomas Kilgrew, playwright, 1683; René Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle, explorer, murdered by his own men in Texas 1687; William Henry Playfair, architect, 1857; George Richmond, novelist, 1896; Edgar Rice Burroughs, novel-

ist and creator of "Tarzan", 1950. On this day the Rev John White formed the New England Company in Massachusetts Bay, 1628; Sydney Harbour bridge was officially opened, 1932 following an internal dispute, British parachute troops took over the Caribbean island of Anguilla, 1969; during a severe gale, the 1,260th television mast at Emley Moor, Yorkshire, crashed to the ground, 1970. Today is the Feast Day of St Alcmund, prince of Northumbria, St John of Panacea, St Joseph (husband of the Virgin) and St Landolf.

Lectures

National Gallery: Alexander Sargent, "Mothers (III): Mazon, Queen Mariana of Spain in Mourning", 1pm. Tate Gallery: Stuart Curran, "Painting Down Personal Experience: Giacomini, Bacon and Dubuffet", 1pm. National Portrait Gallery: Jacob Simon, "The Art of the Picture Frame (III): the 19th century", 1.10pm. Wallace Collection, London W1: Guy Evans, "Femiles in the Wallace Collection's Paintings", 1pm. School of Oriental and African Studies, London WC1: Professor James Read, "Law in Africa: back to the future?", 5.30pm. Royal Society (Medawar Lecture), London SW1: Professor Lewis Wolpert, "Is Science Dangerous?", 5.30pm. Royal Institution of Great Britain, London W1: Professor Ian Pells, "Ecology, the Environment and You", 1pm.

LAW REPORT: 19 MARCH 1998

Unregistered architect could not use 'FRIBA'

James v Hellard; Queen's Bench Divisional Court (Lord Justice Pill and Mr Justice Gage) 6 March 1998

The use of the initials "FRIBA" in a business letter by a person who was no longer registered as an architect and was offering his services as an arbitrator constituted an offence under the Architects Registration Act 1938.

The Divisional Court allowed an appeal by the prosecutor by way of case stated against the decision of Woolwich Crown Court, which had allowed Ronald Baden Hellard's appeal against his conviction at Greenwich Magistrates' Court of an offence contrary to sections 1 and 3 of the Architects Registration Act 1938.

The offence charged the respondent with carrying on business under the style or title of architect whilst not registered

under the 1938 Act, in that he had used the initials "FRIBA" in a letter and an enclosure thereto.

Elizabeth Appellby QC and Timothy Dutton (White Son & Pepper) for the appellant; Jonathan Marks QC (Sheehy & Co, Reliance) for the respondent.

Lord Justice Pill said that it was not in dispute that the respondent had received a telephone request from a Miss Sahirad to act as arbitrator in a dispute between the company of which she was a director and another firm about alteration works at premises in Wansstead. He had replied by letter on notepaper which was headed "Polycon Aims Ltd - Adjudication and Arbitration" and had signed the letter with his name followed by "DipArch FRIBA FIMgt FCIAR".

At the material time the respondent was no longer a "person registered" as an architect for the purposes of section 1 of the Architects Registration Act 1938, though he had been registered for many years, nor was he any longer a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (FRIBA). At all times Miss Sahirad had believed the respondent to be registered as an architect, and when she discovered that he was not, she had complained to the Architects Registration Board.

The issues arising on the appeal were whether the respondent's name followed by his qualifications under the signature to the letter came within the words "name, style or title" under which he was carrying on a business, whether the use of the initials FRIBA required a finding that it was a name, style or title containing the word "architect", and whether the business being

practised or carried on by the respondent was a "business" within the meaning of section 1 of the 1938 Act.

The court had no difficulty in holding that by placing his name and qualifications beneath his signature on the letter, the respondent was a person practising or carrying on business under that name, style or title within the meaning of section 1(1). Moreover it was his personal services as an arbitrator which were being sought and it was those services which he was offering. In the circumstances, he could not escape liability on the ground that it was the limited company and not the respondent which was carrying on the business.

The words "practice" and "business" could not be limited to practice as an architect or in the business of architecture. Such an interpretation

would involve reading into section 1(1) words which were not there. As a matter of construction, there was no justification for doing that, and no policy reason which required the section to be limited in that way. Even if a limited construction were to be given to the section, it should in any event be sufficiently wide to cover practice or business as an arbitrator in a building dispute. Expertise in architecture was plainly a qualification for the appointment.

The acronym FRIBA did contain the word "architect"; it had no meaning except to denote several words, one of which was "architect". That construction avoided the absurdity of it being an offence to include as part of a title "Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects" and not an offence to use "FRIBA".

Kate O'Hanlon, Barrister

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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

Pound soars to nine-year high on rate fears

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

THE POUND leapt to a nine-year high on the foreign exchange markets yesterday as the financial markets concluded that Gordon Brown's Budget made higher interest rates a sure bet.

The stock market surged to claim a clutch of new records as investors gave the Budget the "thumbs up". The FTSE 100 closed at an all-time high of 5,903.6, up 68.7 points, as sentiment was boosted by a combination of positive economic data.

The reaction in the currency markets, which took sterling two pence higher to above 3.05 German marks and left exporters appalled, ignored figures which showed a dip in retail sales last month and average earnings rising by less than expected.

The Chancellor calmed the markets a little by pointing out that his two Budgets would take £17bn out of the economy over two years. "I don't think anyone can say it is anything other than a prudent stance," he said.

Mr Brown said the outline arithmetic for the Budget had been made available to the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) when it met in March, and opted to leave interest rates unchanged at 7.25 per cent.

It is no secret that Treasury officials would have preferred the Bank to raise rates enough to be able to signal that they had probably reached a peak. They believe it is the possibility of another increase in the cost of borrowing that is fuelling speculation in the currency markets.

Many City economists agreed yesterday that fiscal policy was al-

ready tight, even though the Budget measures were broadly neutral. In a post-Budget circular Goldman Sachs described policy as the toughest since 1981.

Robert Barrie at CSFB said: "The neutral Budget leaves fiscal policy tight and the public finances in good shape."

However, Michael Saunders at Salomon Smith Barney said: "There was more tightening than expected in the 1997/98 fiscal year but there will be less in 1998/99." The squeeze was easing, he said.

Either way, the widespread view that it is now up to the Bank of England to slow down the economy left sterling looking irresistible to dealers. Its index against a range of currencies leapt by 0.7 to 107.5, the highest since the end of 1988.

Roger Bootle, chief economist at HSBC Markets, said: "Our export business is, I think, in danger of being devastated by a pound this high. It is ludicrously overvalued."

Michael Robson, president of the UK Steel Association and commercial director of British Steel, warned, in a radio interview: "It takes 100 years to get export business, and you can lose that business in two or three minutes."

He added: "This involves a progressive and significant loss of jobs, both inside the steel industry and, I believe, also inside UK manufacturing."

The MPC is due to meet on 9 April. It has been split since January over whether or not to raise rates, with the published minutes showing the vote divided four-four in February. Eddie George, the Governor of the Bank of England, used his

casting vote to leave interest rates unchanged.

Ironically, new figures yesterday tended to support the doves. The number of people claiming unemployment benefit fell by 13,700 in February to the lowest since July 1980. Although it was the 24th consecutive fall, the pace of decline has clearly slowed in the past three months.

In addition, the underlying growth of average earnings in the year to January was lower than expected at 4.5 per cent, the same as December. An initial estimate showing an increase in November and December was revised down.

The Office for National Statistics said the actual difference was exaggerated by rounding, and earnings growth had been stable for four months. Hawkish economists argue that pay deals, especially in the private sector, are as high as they can be if the Bank is to meet the inflation target.

Mr Brown warned yesterday of the need for moderation in pay deals. He said: "The performance of the economy this year and next will to a large extent depend on how people who bargain on wages respond."

Additional reassurance that the economy might be slowing as needed to keep inflation on track came from separate figures showing a 1.2 per cent fall in the volume of retail sales last month.

But this followed a surge in January, thanks to price discounting in the new year sales. The underlying trend has changed little, with sales up 5.5 per cent in the latest three months compared with a year earlier.



High stakes: The casino industry is reeling from the news that it faces an extra tax bill of £20m. London gaming clubs will be particularly affected

Casino groups' shares tumble over tax hike

By Andrew Yates

SHARES in casino groups tumbled yesterday as the market digested the shock decision by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, to increase gaming duty in the Budget.

Shares in London Clubs fell 35p to 232.5p and Capital Corporation slumped 15p to 126p. Both companies will be particularly badly affected by the tax hike due to their strong presence in the London casino market which will bear the brunt of the Budget changes.

The casino industry faces an extra tax bill of £20m in the year to April 1999, rising to £25m the year after.

The two casino operators blasted the Chancellor's decision and pleaded with the Government to reassess the situation.

A statement released by Capital Corporation yesterday said: "The company deeply regrets this punitive tax measure. Within a highly regulated industry the opportunities to pass on such a substantial increase in taxes are extremely limited, and the proposed change is likely to undermine London's pre-eminent position in the casino market."

London Clubs said the move would blow a £12m a year hole in its profits. Allan Goodenough, the chief executive

of London Clubs, said: "I do not believe that it was the Chancellor's intention to create a 'London Clubs tax' and we shall therefore be pressing as strongly as possible to persuade the Government that this is a mistake and should be reversed."

The Government announced on Tuesday that the top rate of gaming duty payable on casinos' gross gaming yield, which is the amount left over after gamblers' winnings, is to rise to 40 per cent from 33.5 per cent from 1 April. The move will hit the larger casino operators hardest which tend to be sited in the capital. Last year more than 80 per cent of gaming duty was paid by 21 London casinos out of the total of 116 in the UK.

Shares in other casino groups dipped yesterday. Stakis, which owns a number of casinos as well as hotels, gave up 2.5p to 118p and Ladbrokes slipped 1.75p to 336p.

The industry, in conjunction with the British Casino Association, now intends to lobby the Government furiously over the next few weeks in an attempt to overturn the controversial decision.

The Customs and Excise department stands to collect more than £100m a year from gaming duty after the tax hike. It is a severe blow to an industry which is worth more than £2.3bn a year.

NI reforms 'should mean lower minimum wage'

By Andrew Verity

THE HEAD of the Government's tax and benefit review is urging the Government to bring in a low minimum wage, claiming it is justified by radical reforms of National Insurance adopted in Tuesday's Budget.

In a little-noticed paragraph in his report on modernising the tax and benefit system published this week, Martin Taylor said: "I believe [the reforms] considerably increase the attractions of offering and taking low-paid work."

Combined with a low starting rate of income tax, this should so increase the financial attractiveness of low-paid jobs as to allow the minimum wage to be set at a

lower level than would otherwise be the case. I urge the Low Pay Commission to take this reform into account in their deliberations."

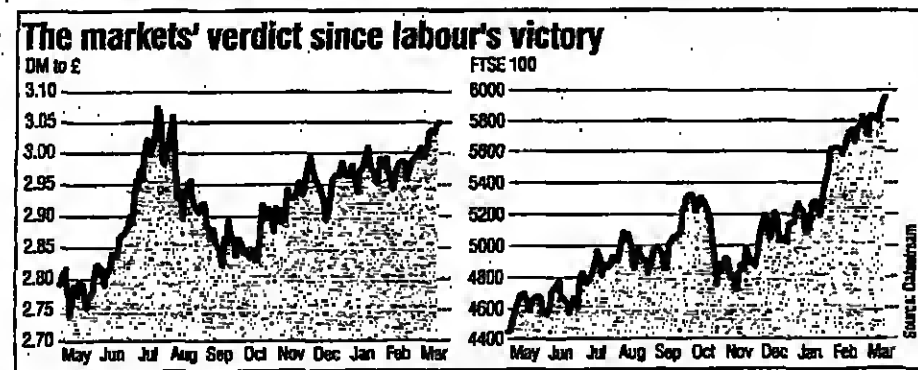
The report drew a lukewarm response from employee benefit experts who pointed out that in many cases the reforms would lead to higher national insurance contributions (NICs) for low-payers. Under Mr Taylor's reforms, an employer paying £150 a week - a possibility under a national minimum wage - would contribute £842. That compares with £750 under the current system.

John Whiting, an employee benefits expert at Price Waterhouse, the accountancy firm, said: "There are a lot of employers who, once they sit down and work out the numbers, are going to find they are paying more. Arguably, this is a step in the wrong direction."

According to the Institute of Fiscal Studies, higher employer NICs will sometimes be offset by the abolition of the "entry fee" for employee's NICs. The entry fee requires employees to pay contributions worth 2 per cent of all their wages when they earn just over £64.

The reforms will boost employer contributions for high earners by approximately 2 per cent - a tax rise which is expected to be passed on to employees.

IFS verdict on NICs, page 27



£462,000 pay-off for Hanson's son angers shareholders

By Andrew Yates

ROBERT HANSON, already one of the most eligible bachelors in Britain, has received a controversial £462,000 pay-off from the firm founded by his father Lord Hanson. Including bonuses, salary and the compensation pay off, Robert received a total of £825,000.

The pay-off has incurred the wrath of shareholders. Several large institutions are unhappy that he is being compensated for the 18 months left on his contract, even though he left his position of corporate development director of his own accord to pursue interests at the Hanson family's private transport business.

The package given to Robert

Hanson, who has been seen with a string of beautiful women on his arm over the last few years, was much higher than originally reported. It included 18 months of benefits and bonuses as well as his basic salary of £220,000 a year.

Lord Hanson also made more than £900,000 from the group in the 15 months to December, including a £317,000 profit on the sale of share options. The figures were disclosed in the company's annual report.

Robert followed in his father's footsteps by announcing his resignation from Hanson last year, ending the family's association with the group. Their exit came in the wake of the break-up of the £1.0bn Hanson

empire. The Hanson group has been turned from a sprawling conglomerate to a pure building materials group.

Hanson is now chaired by Christopher Collins, who is married to the niece of Lord Hanson. Mr Collins endorsed the payments to Robert Hanson at the time of his departure.

The company claims that Robert Hanson was entitled to the pay-off as his role was materially changed after the company was demerged from the Energy Group. Hanson said yesterday the group no longer needed a corporate development director as it was now concentrating on finding smaller, bolt-on acquisitions.

Robert Hanson has not been replaced and his job is now be-

ing performed by Andrew Douglas, the group's chief executive.

The money will help Robert Hanson fund his hectic social life. Never far from the gossip columns, Robert Hanson has been romantically linked with Sophie Anderson, who is famous for modelling lingerie and "It-girls" such as Tara Palmer-Tomkinson and Normandy Keith.

Hanson's annual report published yesterday also revealed that Brian Hellings, a former finance director, received compensation of £430,000 last year. Mr Hellings was appointed to help out the finance department after stepping down as a director of the group. However his role was also downgraded after the demerger.

Outlook, page 25

Wickes directors double their money

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

Two directors of Wickes, the recovering DIY retailer, received bonuses of almost £500,000 between them last year, almost doubling their salary in both cases.

Bill Grimsey, who was promoted to chief executive in 1996 after the company discovered a back hole in its accounts, received a bonus of £248,000. This took his total remuneration last year to £511,000. Bill Hoskins, finance director, received a £200,000 bonus, taking his total pay to £449,000.

The company said the bonuses were performance-related, although no method of calculation was detailed in the accounts.

A spokesman for Wickes said the bonuses were justified given

the recovery of the company which was close to collapse after the £50m black hole was discovered and Henry Sweetbaum departed as chief executive.

"The salary packages at Wickes are heavily performance-related and the directors' success in achieving profits that few thought possible at the beginning of 1997 are reflected in the bonuses for that year. If they don't succeed they get no bonus. Over the last year or so shareholders have seen the shares rise in value from around 130p to approaching 300p." They closed up 3p yesterday at 297.5p.

The accounts, published yesterday, also showed Mr Grimsey was granted almost 400,000 share options at 175.5p. These are not exercisable for two years but are already worth £480,000.

LDV and Daewoo to create 2,000 jobs

By Michael Harrison

THE GOVERNMENT will today announce financial support for a £160m van plant to be built in Birmingham by LDV and Daewoo of Korea creating up to 2,000 jobs.

Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, is expected to confirm that the Government will contribute around £23m-£28m of assistance to the joint venture, which intends to produce 80,000 vans a year by 2005.

Daewoo is expected to invest a similar amount and take a minority shareholding in LDV. The chairman of Daewoo, Woo-choong Kim, plans to fly in for a formal signing ceremony next week.

The investment is a feather in the cap for the UK at a time when other Korean conglomer-

ates are cancelling investment plans in the wake of the downturn in the Asian economies.

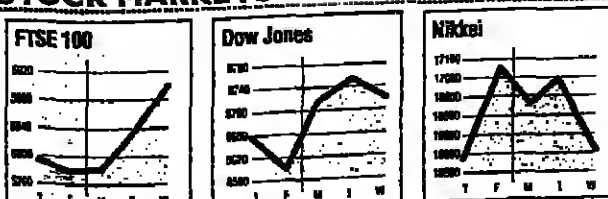
The new plant will produce 40,000 LDV-badged vans and 40,000 Daewoo-badged vans a year to replace the current LDV range of Pilot and Convoy vans. About 75 per cent of production will be exported.

LDV produces 20,000 vans a year at present with a workforce of 1,500 and is Britain's only remaining independent van maker. It was bought out by its management after the collapse of the Dutch truck and van group DAF.

Daewoo plans to build 150,000 of the same van range at a new plant in Poland. Daewoo has invested £130m in a UK dealer network and has a technical design centre in Worthing, Sussex, employing 1,000.

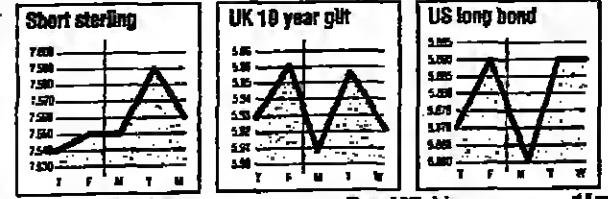
A DAY IN THE MARKETS

STOCK MARKETS



Index	Close	Change	Change(%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield(%)
FTSE 100	5903.60	68.70	1.18	5861.80	4189.10	3.28
FTSE 250	5424.90	21.80	0.40	5403.10	4384.20	2.85
FTSE 100	2831.40	29.00	1.04	2808.70	2075.70	3.20
FTSE 100	2758.09	27.13	0.99	2737.52	2058.07	3.17
FTSE All Share	2758.09	27.13	0.99	2737.52	2058.07	3.17
FTSE SmallCap	2575.90	10.30	0.40	2556.00	2182.10	2.73
FTSE 100	1355.30	3.20	0.23	1329.70	1225.20	3.11
FTSE 100	1047.00	1.00	0.10	1128.80	983.90	1.04
Dow Jones	7723.83	28.15	0.36	8749.89	6356.78	1.06
Nikkei	18618.88	-377.92	-2.02	20910.79	14489.21	0.92
Hong Kong	11121.65	-133.89	-1.19	10820.31	7906.15	3.44
Dax	4918.72	-26.95	-0.55	4949.55	3192.33	1.59

INTEREST RATES

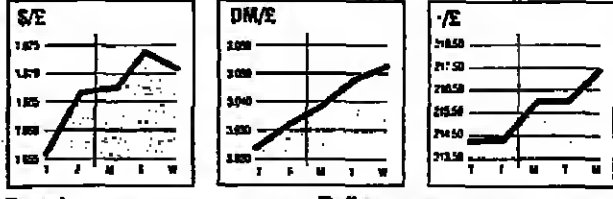


Money Market Rates	3 month	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
UK	7.50	1.25	7.50	0.75	5.92	-1.51	5.84	-1.78	
US	5.50	0.05	5.78	-0.34	5.58	-1.16	5.89	-1.07	
Japan	0.70	0.16	0.66	0.04	1.74	-0.88	2.34	-0.78	
Germany	3.51	0.28	3.74	0.29	4.86	-1.03	5.43	-1.28	

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (b)	Chg (d)	% Chg	Falls	Price (d)	Chg (d)	% Chg
Strawhorse	445.00	33.50	8.14	London Clubs	232.50	-35.00	-13.08
Dumro	465.50	34.00	7.88	Wheat	280.50	-38.00	-10.68
Booker	258.00	18.00	7.47	Hardy Oil & Gas	280.50	-14.50	-5.27
Wheat Group	304.50	18.50	6.47	Colt Telecom	1550.00	-80.00	-4.97

CURRENCIES



Pound				Dollar			
	at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago		at 5pm	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6715	-0.21c	1.5890	Swedish	0.9993	+0.05p	0.9251
Yen	167.48	+0.81	166.67	D-Mark	1.9374	+0.02	1.9374
Index	107.50	+0.70	104.76	Yen	130.19	+0.73	129.59
E Index	107.50	+0.70	95.80	S Index	103.40	0.00	104.10

OTHER INDICATORS									
	at 5 pm	Change	Qtr	Yr Ago		Index	Qtr	Yr Ago	Most Recent
Brass (lb)	29.51	0.35	28.03		GDP	114.10	2.50	170.88	Fair
Gold (lb)	119.1	0.10	118.00		WPI	180.30	3.40	155.88	Fair
Silver (\$)	5.80	-0.27	5.21		Empty Homes				

www.bloomberg.com/uk

source: Bloomberg

OTHER INDICATORS

Commodity	Price	Change	% Change	Commodity	Price	Change	% Change
Brent Oil	11.51	0.33	2.83%	Brent Oil	11.51	0.33	2.83%
Gold	280.50	-1.25	-0.45%	Gold	280.50	-1.25	-0.45%
Silver	6.80	-0.27	-3.97%	Silver	6.80	-0.27	-3.97%

TOURIST RATES

Country	Rate	Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Australia (dollars)	2.4248	Italy (lira)	2.924	USA (\$)	1.6321
Austria (schillings)	20.75	Japan (yen)	215.42		
Belgium (francs)	60.98	Malta (lira)	0.6381		
Canada (\$)	2.3087	Netherlands (guilders)	3.3303		
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8602	Norway (kroner)	12.43		
Denmark (kroner)	11.34	Portugal (escudos)	300.02		
Finland (markka)	9.0369	Spain (pesetas)	250.03		
France (francs)	9.9051	South Africa (rand)	7.9380		
Germany (marks)	2.9643	Sweden (kroner)	13.00		
Greece (drachmes)	54.22	Switzerland (francs)	2.4445		
Hong Kong (\$)	0.25	Turkey (lira)	380.929		
Ireland (pence)	1.067	USA (\$)	1.6321		

Source: Thomson Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

ICL to press ahead with float despite contract delay

By Michael Harrison

ICL, the information technology company owned by Fujitsu of Japan, yesterday struggled off delays on a £1bn contract to automate the benefit payments system by confirming that it is to press ahead with a stock market flotation.

Analysts estimate that the flotation, scheduled to take place in 2000, could value ICL at between £1.5bn and £2bn. The company returned to the black in 1997 after several years of heavy losses caused by its withdrawal from computer manufacturing.

Announcing a turnaround from operating losses of £6.6m in 1996 to profits of £32.5m last year, Keith Todd, ICL's chief executive, said a flotation was "very definitely on".

But he said ICL need to increase its operating margins three-fold over the next two years, indicating that it expects to be making profits of about £180m on sales of £3bn by the millennium.

Mr Todd also denied ICL had encountered problems with the State Benefit payments contract - the biggest IT scheme awarded under the Government's Private Finance Initiative and ICL's biggest single project.

Mr Todd rejected reports

that the project was in danger of collapse or that ICL, Pathway, the subsidiary which is running the project, was in danger of being removed from the contract, although he confirmed that talks had taken place with the two clients.

"The customer loves this project and the software is world class. I only have one problem and that is working through the number of international opportunities we have to install this type of network."

He said that both Denmark and Australia were interested while ICL would decide in the next three to four weeks whether to proceed with a major benefits automation project elsewhere in Europe.

ICL has so far spent £125m in the contract and its total investment is expected to reach around £600m before its start to earn significant revenues from 2000 onwards. ICL receives a payment each time the card is used. There are 19 million benefit claimants carrying out a total of some 890 million transactions each year.

The company has estimated revenues from the contract at £1bn but its franchise expires in 2005 at which time it will have to tender to renew the concession.

Mr Todd said he was very confident ICL Pathway would meet its operational targets it had agreed with the Benefits Agency but refused to comment on whether the terms of the contract were being renegotiated.

However, John Bennett, the managing director of ICL Pathway, said that no changes in the contract or any possible penalty payments for late delivery were being considered. "There are no changes at all. The structure of the contract remains intact," he said.



Sun, sea and shares: Thomson Travel will entice investors with a package of benefits including discounts on a range of holidays

Thomson Travel set to make £1.5bn market debut

By Andrew Yates

THOMSON Travel, the UK's largest tour operator and owner of Lunn Poly travel agent chain, yesterday confirmed plans to come to the stock market, in what would be the biggest flotation of the year so far.

City analysts believe the group will be valued at up to £1.5bn. And to entice customers and private investors to buy shares in the group it plans to offer a package of benefits including discounts on a range of holidays.

Thomson Corporation, the Canadian media giant, has finally decided to hive off the

travel group after it became clear that it would have difficulty funding the ambitious expansion of both arms of its business.

Thomson Travel plans to hit the acquisition trail once it comes to the market. It is eyeing up targets throughout Continental Europe where it will come head to head with Air-tours, its arch-rival in the UK, which has similar ambitions. The company is also keen to expand its cruise operations.

Paul Brett, chief executive of Thomson Travel, who has lobbied hard for the group's independence said yesterday: "I am very excited. The logic for this deal was inescapable. There

would have been a competition for funds at Thomson."

Mr Brett and his fellow directors are likely to buy shares in the new group and will be entitled to a new long-term incentive and bonus package. All of Thomson Travel's 14,000 employees will be able to purchase shares at a preferential price.

Thomson also plans an aggressive push to win market share in the UK by offering more family holidays. However it ruled out a large increase in capacity which lead to heavy discounting and brought the industry to its knees in 1995.

Thomson Corporation is

selling the whole travel group but the Thomson family are keen to retain their involvement and are expected to buy up to 20 per cent of Thomson Travel.

Thomson Corporation is expected to use the sale proceeds to continue its conversion from a newspaper company into a publisher of specialist financial information. The decision to float the group has also been prompted by the result of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission investigation into the industry which left travel groups virtually unscathed.

Thomson Travel is also paying £125m to its Canadian parent to take control of

Fritidsresor, the troubled Scandinavian holiday group Nordic-region holiday company.

Thomson Travel is a market leader in the UK travel industry. Its tour operating arm served 3.7 million customers last year, accounting for more than a fifth of the £7bn package holiday market. As well as owning almost 800 Lunn Poly shops the group owns Britannia Airways, the UK's largest charter airline and Holiday Cottages, the biggest holiday cottage supplier.

Thomson announced a rise in pre-tax profits to £112.4m from £81.9m, thanks to the buoyant holiday industry and the strong pound.

Satellite group plans £1bn move to market

By Peter Thal Larsen

INMARSAT, the international satellite group in which British Telecom holds a significant stake, is preparing a £1bn flotation within the next two years after its owners cleared a restructuring which will turn the group into conventional company.

More than 81 countries have a stake in Inmarsat, mostly through their national telecom companies. The group, which was originally set up to provide distressed sailors with a way of signalling for help, has nine satellites stationed in space allowing it to provide one of the only truly global networks for mobile communications.

However, Inmarsat's co-operative structure means it is ill-equipped to raise the new investment it needs to upgrade its network. The group needs to raise \$2.5bn (£1.5bn) to buy and launch five new satellites which will support Horizon, a new superfast data communications service which will allow computer users to access the internet from anywhere in the world, and will be on the market from 2002.

Major shareholders such as BT, which owns 8 per cent of the company, had threatened to refuse further investment if the company did not change its structure.

If the change is approved by Inmarsat's Assembly next month, it will become a conventional company. For the first year, shareholders will be allowed to buy shares from each other. Inmarsat is also expected to invite equipment suppliers to take equity stakes. The company has the power to issue up to \$500m in new shares.

Subsequently, new investors will be allowed in before the company is floated - probably in New York and London. The flotation could bring a windfall worth several hundreds of millions of pounds for BT.

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Kingfisher beats expectations

IT IS one of the ironies of the City that attendances at companies' results meetings are often in inverse proportion to the quality of financial performance. Two or three years ago, when Kingfisher was struggling, the Woolworths and B&Q retailer had to hold its meetings in a large conference hall to accommodate all the ambulance chasers. Now a small room is sufficient and only half a dozen turn up.

None of this will bother Sir Geoff Mulcahy, Kingfisher's lugubrious chief executive who has worked wonders with this group, having almost lost his grip on it back in 1995. It is firing on all cylinders and the share price has reached new highs. Having dipped to a low of 389p in early 1995, the shares have been reaching skyward ever since and a 25 per cent surge this year alone has taken them to a record high of 1,046p, up 59p yesterday.

The reason is that with each set of results and quarterly sales updates, analysts have to keep upgrading forecasts. Yesterday's full-year figures were a case in point, exceeding all expectations with a 34 per cent rise to £520.5m.

Like-for-like sales across the group were 8.3 per cent ahead of last year with B&Q leading the way with a whopping 12.6 per cent gain. Of course, if a DIY retailer was not raking it in last year, with rising house prices and negative equity disappearing, then they never will. But B&Q has increased its market share from 17 to 19 per cent in a year and its Warehouse format of larger stores are performing strongly. With 30 outlets now, it plans a further seven this year and sees scope for a total of 75.

Woolworths is working well with the introduction of electronic point of sales helping margins, which rose from 5.5 per cent to 6.3 per cent. Superdrug profits dipped due to investment in the portfolio and Darty is starting to see an improvement in the tough French electricals market.

The key question with Kingfisher now is can Kingfisher continue its terrific run? Sir Geoff Mulcahy made a point of warning that the five hikes in interest rates could be affecting consumer confidence. Sales at Comet are starting to slow down and, as the company admits, it was electrical retailers that were lead indicators of the last recession.

On increased forecasts of £572m, the shares trade on a forward rating of 19. This is only in line with the retail

Kingfisher: At a glance

Market value: £7.4bn, share price 1096p (+59p)

Five-year record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£m)	4.5	4.9	5.3	5.8	6.4
Pre-tax profits (£m)	309.3	244.2	311.7	388.7	520.5
Earnings per share (p)	29.88	37.65	31.5	41.4	57.4
Dividends per share (p)	14.9	15.2	16.2	19.0	23.0

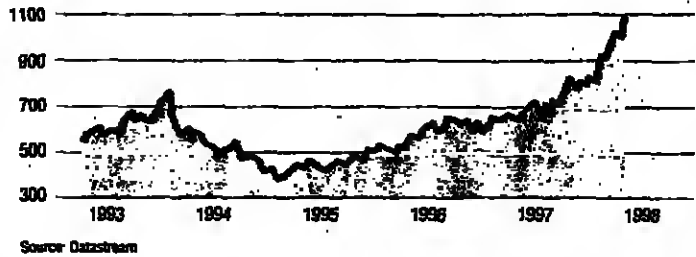
Operating profit

by division, £m



Share price

prices



sector and analysts are confident about prospects. But with a tougher year on the high street ahead, this may look like the top in six months time. It could be time to look in profits.

Smiths profits from free cash

SIR ROGER HURN's track record at Smiths Industries is second to none. Under his stewardship, the engineering group has prospered in industries that are far from sexy: aerospace, medical systems and industrial products. As Sir Roger turns his attention to the chairmanship of GEC, however, the question is whether Smiths can keep it going.

Interim results for the six months to 31 January, released yesterday, showed no obvious weak points. Despite a squeeze from sterling, Smiths produced a solid 11 per cent increase

in pre-tax profits to £89.3m. That rise includes a contribution from Graseby, the medical pumps business that Smiths bought last year for £136m. But the aerospace and industrial divisions also produced good organic growth. Only the medical side, which suffered from the strong pound, lagged behind with a 3 per cent underlying rise.

Can this last? Well, maybe. The key to Smiths' success is its huge free cash flow, which it can use to finance investment and acquisitions. Even after paying for interest, tax, dividends and capital spending, Smiths generated almost £34m of cash in the half year.

A few clouds have appeared on the long-term horizon, however. The first is the civil aerospace cycle, which is likely to head down again in a few years' time. Smiths says demand for defence aerospace will more than make up the shortfall, but analysts wonder what will happen to margins. Another question is how long Smiths can carry on its three-pronged growth strategy before

the divisions become too cumbersome and suitable acquisitions too hard to find. Smiths' role in the restructuring of the European defence industry is another imponderable.

On full-year profit forecasts of £220m, the shares, up 2.5p to 874p, trade on a forward p/e ratio of 18, suggesting the market thinks Keith Butler-Wheelhouse, Sir Roger's successor, will produce more of the same. He deserves the benefit of the doubt, but only just. For now, high enough.

Holmes Place builds up gyms

THE GYM is no longer just the preserve of the bulking weight lifter or the injured sports star. Health clubs are becoming increasingly popular with the average man or woman in the street. Even the odd financial journalist has occasionally been spotted on an exercise bike.

The result has been an explosion in the health and fitness market with new clubs springing up everywhere. Holmes Place is one of the new stock market stars that has cashed in on this rapid growth. There is a danger is that the industry will become oversupplied. But with the market forecast to carry on growing by at least 10 per cent a year there should be plenty of room for operators like Holmes Place to expand.

The group plans to accelerate its opening programme, setting up about 10 new clubs a year, which should be the main driver of its growth. On top of that it has signed a deal with Regal Hotels to add up to 25 gyms over the next few years throughout its chain and is looking to grow in Europe.

Holmes Place share price has powered ahead since it floated last November at 128p. Yesterday it jumped another 11p to 287p as it announced that profits more than doubled to £5.4m last year. Analysts forecast current-year profits rising to £6.8m. Even then, the shares trade on a prospective p/e of more than 30 times. However, this is not just a short-term profits story. Earnings growth will be slowed by rapid openings and a new, half a million pound advertising campaign.

The real potential lies over the medium term as club membership rises and its heavy investment programme begins to pay off. On its current rate of expansion Holmes Place will probably triple its size by 2000. The shares are still good value.

Dutch bank gives boost to City job prospects

By Lea Paterson

A DUTCH investment bank gave a much-needed boost to employment prospects in the City of London yesterday by hiring 12 equity staff - including eight from UBS - and saying it would take on up to an extra 75 by the end of the year.

Rabobank said the eight ex-UBS employees included Paul Deslandes, the former head of European equity trading at UBS, and Paul Simpson, an employee in UBS's equity arbitrage division. Mr Deslandes is to be global head of equity trading at Rabobank and Mr Simpson is to be head of equity arbitrage. Both will report to Marcus Grubb, global head of equities at the bank.

The bank said it was trying to build a "research-driven" equities business. The Dutch bank is the latest investment bank to try and capitalise on recent shake-ups in the City, including the merger of UBS and SBC, the sale of the equities divisions of both NatWest and Barclays, and, most recently, the proposed restructuring at Chase Manhattan, the US investment bank.

Commerzbank, a leading German bank, and Donaldson Lufkin & Jenrette, a US bank, have both recently said they intended to recruit hundreds of equity staff in the City.

Earlier this week, both NatWest Markets and Pannure Gordon said they had snapped up some top UBS equity specialists. NatWest Markets - whose equity team will soon transfer to Bankers Trust - has hired nine former UBS staff. Pannure Gordon has hired a further 12.

The other UBS staff hired by Rabobank are Michael Webb and Simon Mills - who will both be directors of pan-European trading - together with John Dow, Simon Spence, Mark Ayres and Darryl Willoughby.

Rabobank has also hired Paul Hammond, who was a head of UK equities at Morgan Stanley, Max Welby and Chris Lee from BZW, the former investment banking arm of Barclays, and Charles Giessen of Salomon Smith Barney.

Bridge pays \$510m for Dow Jones Markets

DOW Jones & Co has agreed to sell its unprofitable financial information unit, Dow Jones Markets - formerly known as Telerate - to Bridge Information Systems for \$510m (£310m) in cash and stock. Under the agreement, Bridge will pay \$360m in cash and \$150m in five-year, convertible preferred stock. With the sale, Dow Jones sheds a money-losing unit that led it to take a \$922.5m charge in the fourth quarter to write down the value of its initial \$1.6bn purchase of Telerate.

Nikon invests £3m in UK

NIKON, the Japanese corporation, is to invest £3m in a new laboratory in Milton Keynes - its first venture in the UK. The ophthalmic lens facility is expected to generate 30 jobs initially and will serve European demand for its lenses. Nikon said the move would complete its global plans for production facilities in Japan, North America and Europe.

Kwik Save deal to go ahead

THE PLANNED £1.3bn merger of supermarket groups Somerfield and Kwik Save was given the go-ahead by the Department of Trade and Industry yesterday. Margaret Beckett, the Trade and Industry Secretary, said she had decided not to refer the merger to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The merged group would have around 7 per cent of the UK market, compared with market leader Tesco's near 17 per cent.

EU approval for HIV drug

GLAXO Wellcome, the drugs giant, has been given approval by the European Commission to market Combivir in all 15 countries in the European Union. Combivir is used for the management of HIV infection. It combined two anti-retroviral drugs in a single tablet, reducing the number of tablets taken, Glaxo said.

Profits rise at P&O venture

P&O Nedlloyd, the container shipper, yesterday said prospects for 1998 and 1999 were good but warned the consequences of the Asian crisis remained uncertain. The year-old Anglo-Dutch joint venture said 1997 profits before interest, merger costs and tax were \$73m (£44.2m) compared with pro forma 1996 pre-tax profits of \$19m.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
American Post (F)	37.47m (28.11m)	6.31m (7.18m)	8.5p (11.5p)	2.16p
Amplify Networks (F)	127.5m (115.2m)	5.7m (6.38m)	16.3p (20.9p)	7.8p (7.2p)
Bancorp (F)	80.82m (80.44m)	3.39m (5.85m)	8.6p (24.4p)	7.3p (7.0p)
Bancorp (F)	540.8m (524.9m)	65.48m (72.98m)	25.2p (20.9p)	11.2p (10.2p)
BT Consumer (F)	74.00m (77.71m)	6.11m (6.95m)	20.5p (20.2p)	8.1p (8.3p)
Chemical Bank (F)	33.85m (34.10m)	6.12m (6.18m)	40.1p (40.3p)	14.3p (13.8p)
Comet (F)	284.3m (302.2m)	58.0m (44.4m)	23.6p (18.5p)	0.5p (0.5p)
Graseby (F)	30.11m (26.31m)	1.33m (1.58m)	5.9p (8.9p)	2.9p (2.4p)
Holmes Place (F)	507.4m (582.1m)	21.23m (33.38m)	21.3p (42.3p)	16.5p (18.6p)
Imperial (F)	381.9m (387.3m)	23.48m (25.8m)	4.05p (1.85p)	2.20p (2.0p)
John Lewis (F)	6.40m (6.61m)	620.8m (688.7m)	97.4p (41.4p)	23.0p (18.0p)
John Lewis (F)	1.48m (1.22m)	32.2m (24.5m)	25.7p (17.7p)	10.5p (6.5p)
New Britain (F)	-	3.53m (1.81m)	4.95p (2.5p)	1.25p (1.0p)
Reckitt (F)	184.7m (118.5m)	13.00m (7.68m)	24.1p (17.7p)	11.8p (7.78p)
Reckitt (F)	179.1m (112.8m)	23.3m (25.6m)	18.2p (18.0p)	5.3p (4.7p)
Reckitt (F)	30.0m (27.86m)	2.23m (2.58m)	4.14p (8.16p)	1.85p (1.75p)
Smith's Industries (F)	883.1m (486.3m)	88.3m (64.2m)	19.7p (17.8p)	8.7p (8.16p)
Woolworths (F)	31.28m (25.66m)	4.11m (6.07m)	14.1p (12.6p)	3.7p (3.0p)
Woolworths (F)	13.17m (11.25m)	1.58m (1.212m)	8.47p (6.21p)	1.50p (1.37p)
Woolworths (F)	312.0m (300.3m)	38.0m (28.4m)	13.1p (8.0p)	4.0p (3.44p)
Woolworths (F)	72.5m (68.0m)	1.11m (2.8m)	2.36p (2.26p)	1.5p (0.8p)

سكوت من الامل



OUTLOOK ON THE CHANCELLOR'S BUDGET STRATEGY, THE IDEA OF A GOVERNMENT STAKE IN RAILTRACK, AND THE PAY-OFF TO ROBERT HANSON

Brown is not such a Tory Chancellor after all

SO YOU thought Gordon Brown was a Tory, did you? Think again. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the measures introduced in the two Budgets since the election amount to the biggest redistribution from rich to poor for decades.

You'd be forgiven for not having noticed. The pain has been so well and cleverly spread that it has barely been felt. Furthermore, the numbers are not large. The bottom half of earners have gained between a half and three per cent of their income, while the top half have lost just 0.3 per cent of theirs. The figures also ignore the fact that the income of high earners is growing at a much faster rate than that of the low paid, so that the gap between rich and poor continues to widen notwithstanding anything the Government has done to correct it.

Even so, some redistribution has been achieved. It is what Labour Governments are supposed to be for, and the reality is that Mr Brown has already gone some of the distance, despite impressions to the contrary. Mr Brown might appear to be the best Tory Chancellor since the war, but underneath it all, he's Labour through and through.

Part of the cleverness of Mr Brown's approach is that there's so little in it that the better off can fundamentally disagree with. Nobody can object too much to the costs of a package of measures to help the poor if the intention is to make work pay. What's more, when this is balanced with progressive measures to help business and enterprise, to complain looks more childish still. Certainly, there has been some grumbling,

most loudly with the Government's attack on pension savings through the abolition of tax credits on dividends, but nearly everything the Chancellor has done has so far paid off, politically and economically.

At the same time, it has been impossible to fault the Chancellor on macro-economic policy. The borrowing requirement has come down faster than expected, and spending control has been tighter than anyone imagined possible. Those who carp that this week's Budget was not tough enough are simply posturing. They would be whingeing about the rising tax burden had it been any tighter.

If there is a cloud on the horizon, it is the strength of the pound. The irony here is that Mr Brown handed the reins over to the Bank of England to take the politics out of interest rate decisions and make sure that if there were tough choices, they would be taken. But who can doubt on the present showing that the Chancellor would have raised rates further and faster if it had been left to him rather than the timorous doves on the Monetary Policy Committee?

Lower interest rates might take the heat out of the pound but given how much of the present monetary tightening in the economy is itself down to the strength of sterling, that could prove very much a double-edged sword. The effect would be doubly inflationary. Alternatively, an immediate sharp increase in rates along with a statement, like the one the MPC issued in August, saying there was no more inclination to tighten, might send sterling lower, such is the psychology of markets.

Strangely, then, the one big question mark hanging over Mr Brown's first innings is not one directly of his own making. There's already been a considerable fiscal tightening under Mr Brown: monetary policy has to be allowed to do the rest in the fight against inflation. With the public finances in good shape, the stock market at another record high and a start made on necessary microeconomic reforms, the Chancellor can afford to ignore the few post-Budget grumbles there are.

Committee heads off the rails

WHILE Gordon Brown has proved he can wear the hair shirt of austerity as well as any Tory Chancellor, the Conservatives are demonstrating that they too are not averse to stealing the clothes that were once worn only on the left of the People's Party.

One of the (unanimous) recommendations yesterday from the Commons Transport Select Committee, which includes a bevy of Conservative members, is that the Government should consider taking an equity stake in Railtrack, the owner of the nation's privatised railroads, signalling and stations.

Finished rubbing the disbelief from your eyes? Quite right, the last politician to air this harebrained idea was Clare Short when she was shadow Transport Secretary. Clare's idea was that once in power Labour would re-assert some form of state influence over the railways by con-

verting the huge public subsidies the network receives into equity. Sort of like a disguised rights issue with the Government emerging as an important minority shareholder.

It was one of the reasons that the last government ended up getting such a lousy price for Railtrack and why the shares have since almost tripled in value. Investors panicked at the prospect of a Labour victory and drove the flotation price down. What on earth are they to make now of a similar proposition receiving all-party support? Ms Short never really explained how the Government or the taxpayer would benefit from taking an equity stake in Railtrack and nor does the Select Committee.

But the idea that investment decisions might in some way be second guessed by politicians or that the dead hand of Whitehall should be allowed to dictate the development of the railways should fill investors with dread. The Select Committee ought to know better and its madcap idea should be stopped in its tracks before it gathers any momentum.

Leaving bad blood with investors

NICE to see that good corporate governance lives on at Hanson PLC, the building materials group demerged a few years back from the conglomerate of the same name.

This was the bit of Hanson which fa-

ther James and son Robert decided to make their home after the conglomerate split into four. Both of them left at Christmas. Lord Hanson simply retired while his son Robert resigned "voluntarily" so as to run his father's privately owned transport business in the North East.

There's nothing wrong as such with successful industrialists wanting their sons to follow in their footsteps, though as a point of principle institutional investors invariably object to the creation of business dynasties and it was always a bit of a mystery as to what the young Robert really did round there.

But what could justify a payoff of nearly £500,000? After all, he was supposed to have gone "voluntarily" and he would never have been there at all but for his father. The same goes for the present Hanson chairman, Christopher Collins, who himself managed to hitch his wagon to the Hanson caravan some years back by marrying the good Lord's niece.

When asked last November about Robert's impending departure, Mr Collins said the young lad could expect some compensation since he had once been corporate development director of a £10bn conglomerate but that role had been reduced by the demerger to the same job in "a focused building materials company".

Poor mite. Nobody thought he meant half a mill, though. We can only assume that to justify such a sum he must have made some great awe inspiring contribution to corporate development. But then again, perhaps it was just leaving.

BT signs deal with China Telecom

By Michael Harrison

BRITISH TELECOM has taken its first step into the Chinese market, potentially one of the biggest in the world, by signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the state-owned operator China Telecom.

The agreement, signed on Tuesday by Sir Iain Vallance, the BT chairman, and Zhang Ligu, the director general of China Telecom, provides for the two companies to swap technology and examine business opportunities.

The MoU brings BT into competition with Cable & Wireless, its UK rival, which hopes to use its presence in Hong Kong to forge links with China Telecom.

com and tap into the expansion of the Chinese telecoms market.

Mr Ligu said: "China Telecom is very keen to develop strong links with BT. A modern and strong telecommunications infrastructure is an essential element to China's future

economic development and it is important we widely co-operate with leading carriers such as BT."

Initially, the agreement will be limited to training and exchange of technologies but BT executives believe it could be the start of a much bigger alliance.

It opened an office in Peking just over a year ago and has been looking at ways to enter the Chinese telecoms market, which is growing at a rate of 10 million new lines a year. This is the equivalent of BT's domestic network growing by half every 12 months.

Microsoft picks UK partner for trial of WebTV

MICROSOFT and British Telecom yesterday linked up for the first time when WebTV, the Microsoft subsidiary which specialises in providing internet over the television, chose BT's internet business to support a trial of WebTV in the UK, writes Peter Thal Larsen.

Several hundred BT customers will be furnished with a set-top box, manufactured by Pace Micro Technology and Sony, and a connection to BT In-

ternet, allowing them access to the internet from their televisions. WebTV is hoping the trial, which will last for about five months, will give it an idea of how British consumers will take to the system.

WebTV has proved popular in the US, where 300,000 viewers are connected to the service. Because the set-top boxes only cost a few hundred dollars, the system is a relatively cheap way to connect to the internet.

Smiths Industries to supply cockpit electronics to Airbus

By Peter Thal Larsen

SMITHS Industries, the engineering group, has made a major breakthrough by agreeing a deal to supply its flight management systems to Airbus, the European planemaker.

The company yesterday announced that Sextant Avionique, the state-owned French electronics group which is a major supplier to Airbus, will include Smiths' technology in its electronics for the cockpit.

The deal allows Sextant to go head to head with Honeywell, a rival US supplier, on cockpit systems for the Airbus. Smiths already supplies a similar flight

management to several models of Boeing.

Smiths would not disclose the financial details of the agreement, which is unlikely to start contributing to its profits until deliveries start in 2002. But Sir Roger Hurn, Smiths' chairman, said the deal was "qualitative rather than quantitative" for the company because it gives Smiths a good chance to expand the amount of work it does for Airbus. Sir Roger said neither Boeing nor Airbus had resisted the company supplying parts to both aircraft manufacturers.

Smiths' system will be especially important to Sextant in the

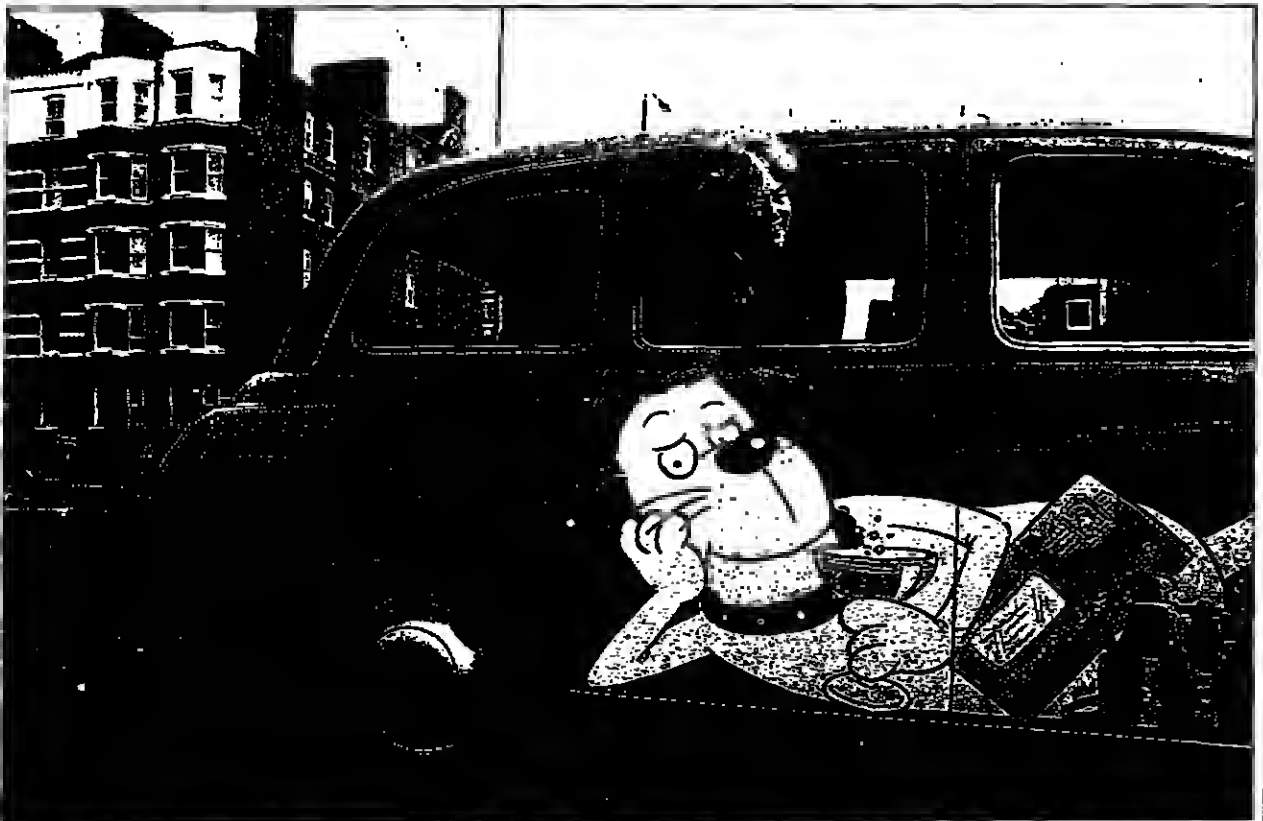
US market, where Boeing dominates but where Airbus is making rapid strides. By being able to offer the same system which pilots are already used to, Sextant stands a good chance of winning in the battle with Honeywell.

Buyers of Airbus aircraft can currently choose either supplier to fit out the cockpits, but until recently Sextant has been hampered by its inability to offer a full range of equipment.

The news came as Smiths announced that profits for the six months to 31 January increased by 11 per cent to £89.3m.

Investment column, page 24

Clare Spottiswoode hails opening of domestic gas markets



More than 4 million customers were expected to transfer to a new gas supplier as the market fully opens to competition, Clare Spottiswoode (above), the gas regulator, said yesterday.

Ms Spottiswoode, director general of Ofgas, said competition in gas supply, which enables domestic consumers to choose which company supplies their gas, is

to reach London in May and is already breaching records. "So far around 7.3 million people... can choose their gas supplier and already around 1.3 million - almost one in five - are choosing to switch."

"By comparison, only one in 10 telephone subscribers have switched away from British Telecom," she added.

Photograph: Kalpesh Lathigra

Kingfisher expands Music Video Club in challenge to WH Smith

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

KINGFISHER, the B&Q and Woolworths retailer, is expanding its Music Video Club (MVC) chain in a move that could see it move into territory traditionally occupied by WH Smith.

MVC has 47 shops specialising in selling entertainment products to older, "lapsed" music buyers who find supermarkets such as HMV and Virgin too loud and intimidating. A further 20 branches will open this year.

Kingfisher is also adding a range of 7,000 books to its

Hampshire, in a trial that could also have implications for WH Smith if extended to the whole portfolio.

MVC has signed up 2.5 million members to its club card which bestows discounts on purchases. The database will be used for marketing purposes. Kingfisher said it had not deliberately targeted Smiths but admitted that it could benefit from Smiths' decision that music was no longer a core activity.

The announcements came as Kingfisher unveiled record results for last year. Profits soared by 34 per cent to £520.3m,

in profits at B&Q, the DIY business and good performances from Woolworths and Comet.

Kingfisher shares soared 59p to a new high of 1,037p. The company is now proposing a two-for-one share split to improve liquidity.

Sir Geoff Mulcahy, chief executive, said the group was well placed to build on its good past performance. However, he did warn of a potential consumer slowdown: "There are signs that the five likes in interest rates could be affecting consumer confidence." Sales growth at Comet has slowed a little in re-

Sir Geoff announced further trials in home shopping. Woolworths tested a Christmas catalogue in some stores last year and is planning another mail out in spring. A "back to school" catalogue will be launched in the summer. At B&Q, it has set up a centre call centre for kitchen sales. Sir Geoff said Asia was a possible area of future expansion. Its two branches of B&Q in Taiwan are trading well.

In Europe, the group could afford an acquisition of up to £1bn, he said, but added that nothing was on the agenda at the moment.

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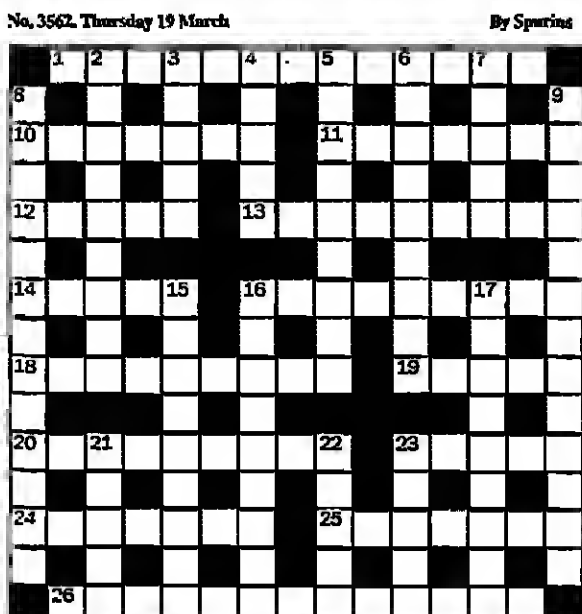
TIME COMPUTER SYSTEMS



Man of the moment: One Man, ridden by Brian Harding, returns to the acclaim of the crowd after winning the Queen Mother Champion Chase at the Cheltenham Festival yesterday

Reports, page 30 and 31; photograph: Peter Jay

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Middlesbrough win the race to sign troubled Gascoigne

Football

By Alan Nixon

MIDDLESBROUGH are to unveil Paul Gascoigne as their new £3m signing today after secret talks over the last 48 hours.

The Rangers and England midfielder is set to join Bryan Robson's promotion-chasing team and Coca-Cola Cup finalists. He could make an early appearance, even possibly against Norwich on Sunday.

The transfer fee is based on a down payment with a large proportion made up in appearances to cover Middlesbrough

because of Gazza's injury problems. Gascoigne has been troubled recently by a calf strain and a hamstring injury at Rangers with reports that he has also had a stomach problem.

Those handicaps cost Gascoigne his England squad place on Monday when Glenn Hoddle also gave him a warning about his fading World Cup chances. Since that decision talks between Gascoigne's agent, Mel Stein, and Middlesbrough have been stepped up. Stein had been at Middlesbrough last week where news broke of a deal with Crystal Palace, confirming that Rangers

would let their wayward star go. Gascoigne was believed to be at a secret location in Tbeside last night awaiting a press conference at The Riverside today. Robson is a close friend of Gascoigne and feels his influence can bring out the best of him this season and beyond.

Palace's prospective owner, Mark Goldberg, will be disappointed at missing out on a high profile target with Gascoigne preferring to pick up his career in the Nationwide First Division.

The move south could not have come a better time. Gascoigne was yesterday given a "very severe warning" for his

flute-playing mime during Rangers' Old Firm New Year match with Celtic. But the Scottish Football Association decided not to impose a financial punishment as Gascoigne was heavily fined by his club.

Celtic had written to the SFA complaining about Gascoigne's actions and asked them to investigate. The SFA deputy chief executive, Bill Richardson, confirmed yesterday: "The executive committee have given the player a very severe warning that this conduct must not occur again. He has been left in no doubt that a repetition will result in very serious consequences."

Stein made it clear at the time that the incident occurred when Gascoigne was being taunted about his private life. According to Tony Higgins, the secretary of the Scottish Players Union, bar-raiding from supporters has reached an all-time high.

"Basically the SFA have made it clear that will take it very seriously when players make gestures," he said. "That's how the police view it as well."

"Fans have a duty to behave themselves and be aware of their actions. But I believe the level of abuse from supporters to players is higher than ever."

More football, page 28

Lee's suffering 'minor' compared with Swales'

FRANCIS LEE received only a taste of the treatment that drove the late Peter Swales out of Manchester City, according to the former Maine Road director Chris Muir, who stood shoulder to shoulder with his friend Swales as the campaign to bring Lee to power raged for months in 1993-94.

"That campaign, in my view, killed Peter Swales in the end," Muir said. "If Lee thinks he's had

it bad over the past few weeks, it's just chicken feed to what Peter Swales had to endure."

Lee quit as chairman on Monday claiming the abuse from angry fans and pressure on his private and business life had forced him out. Lee's wife, Gill, claims their lives had become

hell and the abuse had upset their family. She said: "It gets to you in the end; you say you don't listen or read about it, but it's hard."

However, Muir, now a director of Blackpool and a retired businessman, says he saw worse alongside Swales in the

campaign that brought Lee to power four years ago.

He added: "Compared to what Peter had to contend with this has been nothing. What happened to Peter was a disgrace, what Francis Lee has had to cope with is minor."

"When the campaign to oust

Peter was at its height, fans got into the nursing home where his mother was being looked after and caused trouble. His home was attacked, and fans spat in the face of his wife Brenda when she was out shopping."

Both Lee and the "Forward with Franny" group disassociated themselves with, and condemned, the abuse Swales suffered before Lee took control in February 1994.

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